DÆDALUS

Twentieth-Century Classics Revisited

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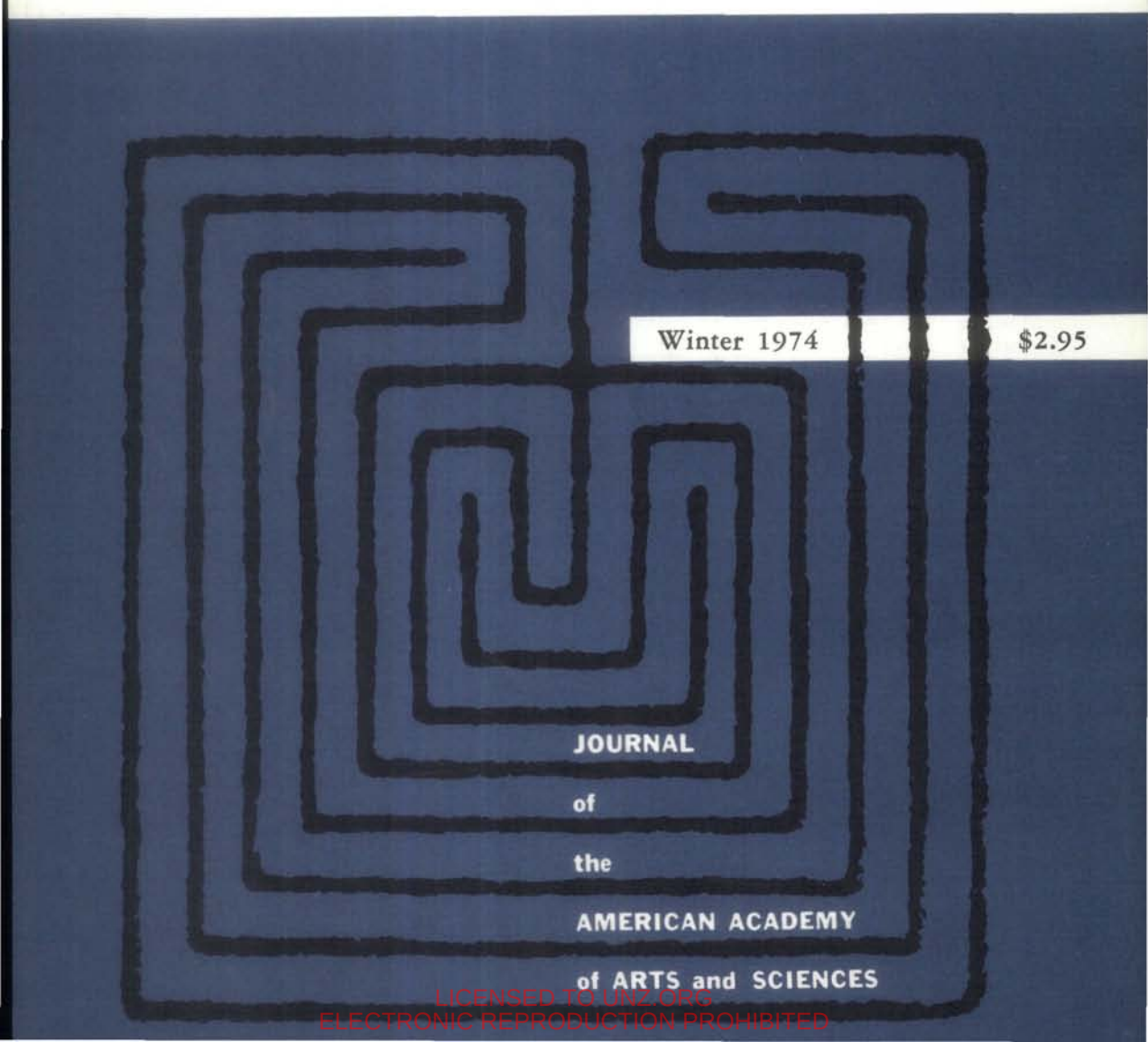

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Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences

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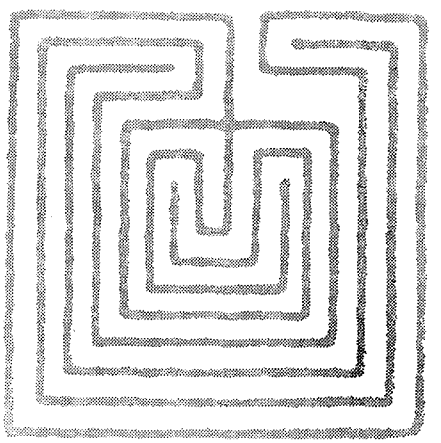

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Preface to the Issue "Twentieth-Century Classics Revisited"

The term classic is an exceedingly ambiguous one. If it is taken to mean a work judged great over a long period of time, then no book published in the twentieth century can possibly qualify. If, on the contrary, it simply implies a judgment generally held about the merits of a specific book, then the distinction may quite properly be attached to certain modern books, even to those of relatively recent date. Needless to say, agreement about the merits of an individual work is not easily obtained, as Charles W. Eliot discovered when he set out to assemble the Harvard Classics, the so-called "five foot bookshelf" that was intended to include all the reading necessary for an individual who aspired to be liberally educated. Eliot had not proceeded very far in his project when critics began to find fault with his selections: they rejected the criteria that led him to favor certain titles over others, and questioned whether he was justified in the choices that he made. Some asked whether the enterprise itself did not betray a certain innocence on Eliot's part. The idea that any collection of books, if read, could provide all the knowledge a man needs to consider himself cultivated seemed more like the ingenious advertising copy of an aggressive commercial publisher than the reasoned educational philosophy of a distinguished university president.

Whatever the merits of Eliot's thinking on how adults might pursue their own education—thinking which owed so much to certain nineteenth-century predilections—the habit of creating libraries of world classics is not much pursued today. This is not to say that the concept of *great books* is now dead; indeed, implicitly or explicitly, it was supported by many of the more innovative general education programs established in the 1940's and 1950's in American colleges and universities. In more recent years, however, there has been a greater reluctance to hazard the pitfalls which await those who propose to select the classics of the Western tradition, or, for that matter, of any other tradition or culture. While some agreement exists about the merits of a limited number of literary, historical, or philosophical texts, consensus even in these areas is becoming more difficult to obtain. And in other areas, even a limited consensus is unlikely. We are still able to speak of a specific book being a classic, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to speak with any confidence about the classics.

When the editors of *Dædalus* began to consider the possibility of publishing critical reviews on twentieth-century classics, we were agreed on one essential point: our purpose was neither to establish a library of great modern books nor to found a committee charged with debating the relative merits of specific works. To choose

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among individual titles, admitting some and rejecting others, seemed a pointless exercise. Our ambitions were of another kind; we believed that it would be interesting to invite scholars in a wide variety of disciplines to write on *any* twentieth-century work that they believed merited reappraisal. In our original letter of invitation, we explained that our purpose was to stimulate discussion of "books that are frequently mentioned and sometimes read, that have been in print for two, three, or more decades, and have now acquired a certain life of their own." We expected that an issue carrying such reviews might shed light on changes in scholarly taste during the century, pointing to modifications in scholarly habits and concerns. The commissioning letter went on to say: "Our hope is that we would be able to include books that have a certain 'permanence of vision,' that are meaningful to readers, even when they are recognized to have certain limitations. We do not intend that all the works should be 'great books'; there may be some advantage in reviewing some that are highly controversial, thought to be insightful by some and unacceptable by others. We are interested in how the reputations of books are made, and why it is possible for them to enjoy several lives, some scarcely anticipated or acknowledged at the time they are first published."

Our instructions were quite general; we wrote: "We would welcome a review on some book by a twentieth-century author (not presently living) that you think significant. We accept the fact that 'significance' is a term that will be read differently by different reviewers. Some will wish to show how a specific work altered a particular discipline; others may argue that it had (or still has) a larger and more general intellectual influence; still others, in the words of one of our editors, may wish to show how a work contributed to creating a new mythology or typology that remains vital even as the book itself has receded in importance. Some of the works, inevitably, will have had greater influence at one time than another; it is not our thought that each of them should necessarily be a work that is widely read today; it is not impossible that several are out of print and unavailable for purchase."

Since our letters of invitation offered maximum freedom to all who agreed to write, there was no possibility of anticipating the books that would be chosen. In several instances, we were surprised by the selections made; occasionally, a less famous work by a specific author was chosen over a more generally acclaimed title; authors sometimes sought permission to review a book quite outside their areas of professed academic competence. Some responded by listing three or four titles, asking us to choose among them.

A fairly substantial correspondence ensued. A number of those who applauded the notion of a *Dædalus* issue on "twentieth-century classics" explained that they themselves would not be able to contribute. The reason, almost universally, was a lack of time. Even a five-month lead time was not sufficient for a number of scholars whom we had hoped to persuade to write. The editors emerged with a new appreciation of the difficulties of securing thoughtful reviews; given scholars' other obligations, book reviewing, even of certain classic texts, seems a luxury that academic calendars do not permit. In the natural sciences, particularly, it was impossible for us to secure the reviews we had hoped for.

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The correspondence with authors was interesting for other reasons also; a number expressed pleasure with our "ground rules," particularly with the decision to stay away from the review of books by men and women still alive. The ancient controversy about the relative advantages (and disadvantages) of anonymous reviewing naturally reappeared. At least one correspondent acknowledged that he was dissuaded from selecting the work of a famous colleague, now dead, because the scholar's widow was still alive, and a truly critical review would almost certainly cause her pain. Correspondence of this kind emphasized the difficulty of contemporary book reviewing; those who have the most to say about a book are often disinclined to make their judgment public. Either because they are or have been personally acquainted with the individual whose book they are asked to review, or because they realize that their review might well cause scandal, they choose to remain silent. In these circumstances, book reviewing is too often done by those less qualified in the subject, who have no discernable stake in the matter, or who pretend that they have none. The reader, by knowing the reviewer's identity, is in a position to judge the reviewer's opinions. This, almost certainly, is the best justification for the signed review.

Because our own reviewers were free to select the books they pleased, they wandered over a vast terrain. At least one asked permission to stretch the definition of a twentieth-century classic to include a book published in 1899: Thorstein Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. Henry Adams, born in 1838, was the oldest of the authors selected. Without exception, the others were born between 1856 and 1893 and came to adulthood before the beginning of the First World War. Except, again, for Henry Adams, all of them survived into the post-Versailles world. Many—a majority of the Europeans—became exiles in the 1920's or 1930's, finding refuge in England, the United States, or Latin America. Not a few survived to see the defeat of Hitler, and some lived on into the 1960's.

There is a sense in which many of them were *marginal* men, not rooted in their societies in ways that certain of their more fortunate (and less famous) colleagues seemed to be. But the term *marginal* is certainly ambiguous. I use it here to embrace men as different as Oswald Spengler, Michael Rostovtseff, Thorstein Veblen, Karl Polanyi, Sigmund Freud, George Santayana, and, most importantly, Henry Adams, who, in their own minds or in those of others, were "outsiders." Writing of Johan Huizinga, William Bouwsma is led to say, "he was not a historian's historian, but always, to his profession, something of an outsider." So, also, Karl Polanyi was not an economist's economist; nor, for that matter, was Ortega y Gassett a philosopher's philosopher. It diminishes their stature not at all to say these things, but it does serve to situate them within a specific professional complex.

A high percentage of the European authors selected came out of the Austro-Hungarian corner of the continental European world and almost all the others came from smaller countries—Belgium, Spain, Ireland, and the Netherlands. Is there any significance in this? Or, is it simply additional evidence of the fact that, in Europe before the First World War, national frontiers were not nearly so significant in the realms of scholarship and art as they have since come to be? Is it possible that a cer-

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tain level of excellence was more generalized then than it is today? Such an opinion would probably be contested.

As one reads these reviews, one cannot fail to be struck by the importance of the classical education that so many of these writers had experienced, and that made them generalists in a time of growing specialization. Whether one interprets their learning to be the expression of bourgeois culture in its final stages, or whether one sees these men as engaged in a losing battle with more parochial forces—nationalism being only the most obvious one—there is no denying the gulf that separates the generations of Freud, Rostovtseff, Pirenne, Huizinga, Ortega y Gassett, Polanyi, and Mannheim from those that have come since. While there is no point in exaggerating the qualities of any of these men, and none of the reviewers does so, it may help to be reminded of the gap and to consider its implications for the present.

It is important to note that the issue divides almost equally between European and American authors. Some readers will wish to consider the very special relations that have subsisted between the two cultures until quite recently. The intellectual trade routes until World War II carried much more cargo originating in Europe, whose destination was the United States, than the other way around. Not the least of the changes since 1945 is that this European intellectual imperialism no longer exists. What the consequences of that change may be is a subject that *Dædalus* may one day wish to consider more fully.

The issue opens with a review of a book published in July, 1918, in Germany. Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* was not simply a reaction to the pessimism generated by the experience of mass slaughter in the trenches along the Western front. As Northrop Frye explains, Spengler's explanation of the West's decline was broadly philosophical. Spengler's argument, Frye says, was Romantic; he was using Fichte's adaptation of Kant to argue that the objective world, while essentially mechanical and subject to rational inquiry, was not the only world that justified study. The natural world was the world of space; it lent itself to study by scientists. The historical world, however, also existed; it was the world of time, and its meanings could be plumbed only by those who possessed feeling, intuition, and imaginative insight. Spengler's concern was with symbol and analogy; he was seeking to study culture, and most importantly, to interpret the condition of his own, the Western culture. Western culture had passed through four stages, symbolized by the seasons of the year. The winter of Western culture began with Napoleon, the world-conqueror. As Frye explains, Spengler, despite his critics, who insist on misreading him, was not espousing a "cyclical view of history"; he had hopes that Germany might still become the Rome of the future. He did not argue that the West was dying, only that it was aging, and that aging carried certain consequences. Rome had been the winter of classical culture; Alexander had been its world-conqueror; analogously, the Punic wars were now occurring in the West; the world states were beginning their battle for supremacy.

The Decline of the West, in Frye's view, is a great Romantic poem which has imposed itself on the consciousness of twentieth-century men, even of those who have

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never read a line of the work. It is because "Spengler's vision is all around us" that it becomes so difficult to ignore him. This, Frye says, does not mean that he must be accepted as "our definitive prophet." There are contingencies that Spengler refused to contemplate, and that make escape from his winter possible, at least theoretically.

The refugee is as much a stock figure in the twentieth century as the revolutionary was in the nineteenth. Michael Rostovtseff is the first of the exiles considered in this volume. *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire,* according to G. W. Bowersock, was the work of a man compelled to flee. Bowersock, quoting Arnaldo Momigliano, accepts the idea that it was "exile" that "made Rostovtseff the great man he was." Exile and his experience in the Russian Revolution also led him to the conclusion that Rome's ruin was caused by "an alliance of the rural proletariat with the military" against the "urban bourgeoisie"—an interpretation for which Bowersock can find no evidence. As he explains, in Rostovtseff, a "marriage of pre-1918 scholarly training and taste with post-1918 personal experience and reflection" resulted in a work of quite extraordinary power. Its flaws are explained by its bias. According to Bowersock, Rostovtseff refused to acknowledge the importance of agriculture in the ancient world; worse still, he mistook a ruling class for a middle class. He deserves praise, however, for his extraordinary archaeological discoveries. Although Bowersock does not agree with certain of his principal hypotheses, this does not prevent him from calling him "the last of the nineteenth-century ancient historians," a man who "wrote very big books on very big themes."

If Rostovtseff's studies of Rome are incomprehensible except in the context of the shock he experienced as a consequence of the Russian Revolution and its aftermath, Henri Pirenne's *Mohammed and Charlemagne* is best understood if reference is made to Pirenne's experiences during World War I. As Peter Brown explains, Pirenne first conceived the idea for his book in an internment camp in Germany where he was imprisoned for refusing to collaborate with the Germans in reopening the University of Ghent as a "nationalist" Flemish university. Pirenne believed that historians were wrong in their assumption that the Germanic invasions were the crucial factor in the decline of the Roman Empire in the West. He argued that the Arab conquests of the eastern and southern Mediterranean in the seventh century created the conditions that led to the true rupture in Roman history. When Western Europe lost its Mediterranean horizons, Pirenne wrote, it closed in on itself; it was then that it came to be dominated by a Northern Frankish aristocracy, whose one interest was in land. Charlemagne's Empire was the true beginning of the Middle Ages, and Charlemagne could never have existed had Mohammed not preceded him.

Brown suggests that Pirenne was led to exaggerate the importance of the Arab conquests by his determination to deny the importance of the Germanic invasions. He feels that Pirenne underestimated the rot that had begun to set into the Roman world as early as the third century, and that he gave insufficient attention to the fissures within Islam itself, where the question of whether Damascus or Bagdad would become the principal center held Islam's fate as a Mediterranean civilization in the balance. However important these reservations may be, they in no way

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diminish Brown's regard for Pirenne as a "great European bourgeois," who, together with Rostovtseff, showed an absolute passion for the "fate of civilizations based on cities."

G. W. Bowersock, in comparing Rostovtseff's humanistic approach with the social scientific preferences characteristic of more modern scholarship, sounds a note that is repeated by William Bouwsma in his interpretation of Johan Huizinga's *The Waning of the Middle Ages*. This work, Bouwsma says, uses all the materials congenial to the humanist; the result is an "old-fashioned, even reactionary" history. According to Bouwsma, Huizinga's history follows in the tradition of Burckhardt; Huizinga knew, as Burckhardt did, that there is a fundamental difference between medieval and modern culture. His problem was to represent that difference; he did so by distinguishing "between the forms of a culture and its content or spirit." Huizinga sees the Renaissance as modern, Bouwsma says, because in "reuniting a genuinely classical spirit to classical forms, Renaissance culture could perceive the great Greeks and Romans as inhabitants of a world very different from its own, remote in time as well as in quality." Renaissance men felt the distance between themselves and the past; they sensed, in short, their own modernity. This, Bouwsma says, was a great discovery: "Renaissance historicism," he writes, "pointed to the relativity of all human culture." Huizinga accepted that his own historical work was also relative; he knew that it was rooted in his own sensibilities. The questions he asked were not immutable, but reflected a particular life experience. Bouwsma writes, "Huizinga, by his own example, was exhorting the historian to make creative use of his unavoidable subjectivity and his dependence on the culture of his time." Subjectivity was not something to be feared or avoided; it was the very condition of historical scholarship. These were the strengths in Huizinga's method. There were also weaknesses, and they were common to his time. Bouwsma suggests that Huizinga was "uncomfortable in an increasingly democratic world, and [that] the development of mass culture left him with a sense of foreboding." He was "reluctant to grapple with change"; he feared change. This made him unaware of certain of the more positive features of the culture that he studied. He could not escape from the idea—though his method ought to have warned him of its hazards—that culture was always the property of a cultivated élite and that it developed only according to its own internal dynamics. Bouwsma points out that Huizinga "refused to look beyond aristocratic culture at the forces that were making the old nobility superfluous and at the energies already at work in the formation of a new culture—a serious limitation that also reflected his indifference to both change and cause."

Rostovtseff, Pirenne and Huizinga belong to a generation of late nineteenth-century "bourgeois" scholars who lived to see and experience the tyrannies of the twentieth century. Karl Polanyi, born later, in 1886 in Vienna, grew up in Budapest, and knew from an early age the peculiar instabilities of twentieth-century middle-European existence. These did not lead him to despair, however, either for himself or for his society. As Charles Kindleberger makes clear, Polanyi, in *The Great Transformation*, rejects the idea that industrialization created the social disruption of the nineteenth century; the enemy was not the factory, but the principle, held equally

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by David Ricardo, James Mill, and Karl Marx that markets were all-important. Polanyi insisted that man was a "social" and not an "income-maximizing animal"; he found the concept of "economic man" offensive. Polanyi, like Christian Socialists of the nineteenth century, valued particularly such social goods as "status, self-respect and standards." It was not the machine but the organization of the economy into a pervasive system of markets that caused the disintegration of an environment that had once been protective. Kindleberger suggests that Polanyi, like others who are prone to praise traditional pre-industrial society, tends to exaggerate its virtues. This, however, does nothing to diminish the book's importance as "a useful corrective to the economic interpretation of the world." Kindleberger urges that it "be read more and more by economists, particularly those of the Chicago school," but he also warns that "to idolize the book, as youth, especially radical youth, is inclined to do is to halt analysis with Hegelian antithesis, whereas the need is to go further."

Thorstein Veblen is not much read today; as Raymond Vernon explains, even those who are radical or reformist in their views do not find Veblen very satisfactory. Veblen saw himself as the great critic of the classical economic orthodoxies of his day; he felt that his conclusions derived from his close study of historical and anthropological evidence. Vernon, while admiring Veblen's ambition, is clearly not persuaded that many of his findings are as useful or as accurate as he imagined them to be. Nor is Vernon satisfied with certain of Veblen's definitions—the distinction, for example, between "the captain of finance" and the "engineer," on which Veblen laid such store. Other of Veblen's distinctions, no less laboriously formulated, appear equally flawed. Why, then, should Veblen be read today? Because, in Vernon's words, he "provided that critical counterweight in the search for human understanding which is constantly needed to remind us that we have not yet arrived." It is not a question, then, of whether or not Veblen has been superseded, or even of whether his arguments were well formulated. His ambition had a certain authenticity; he suggested alternative ways of looking at economic phenomena. It is well to be reminded of his implicit disparagement of abstract model-building techniques.

Because the twentieth century, in common with the nineteenth, has shown a certain penchant for biography, and because the Anglo-American accomplishment in this genre has been particularly noteworthy, the selection of a biographical classic might have been anticipated. None, in fact, was chosen. The closest that anyone came to biography was Judith Shklar, who asked to review Henry Adams' *Education*, a book sometimes thought to be a nineteenth-century classic.

The Education of Henry Adams, according to Judith Shklar, is the confession of a man who thought himself a "failure," a fate as terrible as any that can exist in the United States. Adams, Shklar explains, failed to achieve the kind of political eminence his ancestors had known; he failed also to realize his own intellectual ambitions. In her mind, Adams was a "born spectator," a man afraid to take risks. He chose to give himself to writing because he was aloof and critical, a true "intellectual." Adams knew that his knowledge exceeded that of his ancestors, but what was the use of it all? His education prepared him for nothing; Shklar suggests that he felt "futile, baffled, and passive." The book is, of course, filled with irony; as Shklar ex-

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plains. Adams' discovery was not simply that his own education had prepared him for nothing, but that all education was useless. No curriculum, whether traditional or innovative, could teach the individual "how to cope with an inscrutable, ever-changing world."

Adams was deeply affected by the Civil War, which he refused to see as a tragedy. Like most Americans, Shklar writes, Adams had no sense of the tragic. The Civil War, for him, was "the result partly of ignorance, partly of treason." When he returned from serving his father, who represented the United States as Minister in London during the war, he discovered an America that had little appeal for him. Adams liked neither its capitalism nor its industrial might. As Shklar explains: "He simply feared and hated the men and women whose physical labor was building industrial America." Too skeptical and uncompromising for any kind of political action, he craved political power but insisted that it come to him on his own terms. He remained an "outsider," politically disappointed, intellectually despairing. In the end, he felt that he had no place in his own country. Shklar writes: "Without a real calling, intellectual or religious, this last Puritan withered amid the roaring energies of his age and country. He had failed to govern, or even to know America, and he had spent a lifetime observing himself fail." What he could not realize was that his book, his *Education* was not a failure; in Shklar's view, it "redeemed his life." Indeed, the *Education* became a classic within a very short time of its publication.

The same cannot be said of Mary Beard's *Woman as Force in History*. As Carl Degler makes very clear, the book never really took hold. Now, given the new interest in the history of women, the work is enjoying a revival. Mary Beard was in no sense a traditional feminist; as Degler explains, she believed that the conventional feminist interpretations of history were quite generally wrong. She would not, for example, accept the common view that women had been "subjected" in the past; her concern was always with the extraordinarily important roles that women performed. Historians, if they ignored women, were simply guilty of writing poor history. There was no remedy for that except to point out their errors.

Degler does not pretend that Mary Beard answered many of the interesting questions that she raised; he does, however, insist that she raised them, and that she ought to be recognized and acknowledged for doing so. Beard was unsatisfied with the whole idea that women were simply one more minority, another "oppressed group," somewhat different but essentially analogous to other minorities that historians treated. She argued for a new kind of history, one that did not simply individualize (or masculinize) all actors, but that left room for corporate groups, including the all-important one of the family. Degler does not suggest that the new kinds of social history, so popular today, owes very much to the influence of Mary Beard. He does believe, however, that many of the interests of these social historians are of precisely the kind that Mary Beard wanted to see.

There is some irony in the fact that the celebration of the new social history, with its emphasis on the nonheroic and the nonpolitical, should precede a review of Ortega y Gassett's *Revolt of the Masses*. Ortega's classic, translated into many languages at an early date, expresses a point of view that has been common in

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Europe since the French Revolution. As Geoffrey Clive explains, Ortega was fearful of what his so-called "mass man"—an increasingly common modern psychological type—would do to European society and civilization. Ortega, while fully sympathetic to the wish of ordinary people to improve themselves, worried about a mind-set that he detected in his time, characterized by "inertia, excessive self-satisfaction, and an unwillingness to accept any authority outside a narrow selfhood." Because he distrusted specialization, Ortega preferred the eighteenth century to the twentieth, which made him seem unsympathetic to much that was integral to modernity. Although Clive sees the confusion in Ortega on this point and on others, he feels that Ortega produced a work of rare quality, one that speaks eloquently to many of our contemporary concerns. When Ortega wrote of mediocrity, he did not view it as a class phenomenon, but as the debility of all who are unprepared to make the effort to understand a universe that is complex and differentiated. For Ortega, mediocrity was derived from a "towering and misappropriated self-love divorced from reverence for what over the centuries has proven best for life and thought." In Clive's view, the crisis of education in our time is intimately linked to the flaws of character and intellect that Ortega deplored.

Edward Shils, in writing about Karl Mannheim, is not at all persuaded that his principal work, *Ideology and Utopia,* will survive a close and critical scrutiny. Although Mannheim's life was filled with all the traumas characteristic of twentieth-century European experience, his major methodological contributions did not derive so much from that experience as from certain philosophical presuppositions. Mannheim, according to Shils, had no sympathy for classical individualist theory. In seeking to escape from his Hegelian idealism, he opted for a form of Marxist determinism. While never an avowed Marxist, Mannheim was clearly sympathetic to Marx, and hoped to improve on the master. His tragedy, in Shils' view, was that he never entirely succeeded in emancipating himself either from his idealism or from his Marxism. In creating a new discipline, the so-called "sociology of knowledge," Mannheim insisted that wholly objective knowledge was impossible. Mannheim believed, Shils writes, that "thought was always a creature of social circumstance, never the creator of thought or social circumstance." Mannheim sought constantly to describe and explain how thought derived from specific social situations. Although he was unable to demonstrate that such links did in fact exist, he never abandoned the effort. He seemed scarcely aware, Shils says, that his method reduced "intellectual activities to an epiphenomenal status." His analysis remained essentially Marxist; he did not understand that his explanations were partial, at best, and generally crude. Shils writes: "He had little sense for the social institutional processes which are directly involved in the transmission, establishment, and acceptance of knowledge." If Mannheim continues to be read, Shils says, it will be because, despite his "repeated assertions to the contrary," Mannheim knew that "the quest for truthful understanding is one of the grandest and worthiest activities in which human beings can engage in this life." Shils regrets that Mannheim spent so much of his short life "arguing for a hopelessly wrong position which his own demeanor refuted."

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Talcott Parsons sees Freud as a man constantly growing in stature and reputation. *The Interpretation of Dreams,* for Parsons, seems an even greater work today than when he first read it. He calls it "a unique book," quite unlike any that preceded it, or any that has been published since. Freud, in practicing psychoanalysis on himself, produced, in *The Interpretation of Dreams,* "the primary documentation of this self-analysis." Parsons believes that Freud's principal discovery was to see the human person as a "psychological entity operating as a self-regulating system." He is struck by the fact that psychoanalytic theory appears to be so much in consonance with other scientific theory, from the biological at one extreme of the spectrum to the social and the cultural at the other. This, as much as anything else, may account for the extraordinary success that Freudian theory has enjoyed in so many disparate intellectual disciplines. Parsons, in his review, is only one of many in this volume to attest to the unique influence of Freud in this century.

In reviewing Reinhold Niebuhr's *The Nature and Destiny of Man,* the 1939 Gifford Lectures, Robert Coles draws attention to the importance of this attempt by a Protestant theologian to incorporate the insights of both Marx and Freud. As Coles explains, Niebuhr was the disciple of neither, but this did not prevent him from appreciating both. Niebuhr, Coles writes, provided a historical dimension to the thought of both Marx and Freud that was uncommon in his time and is not universal even now. In recognizing the continuing validity of the concept of original sin, and in relating that concept to certain truths in both Freudianism and Marxism, Niebuhr provided the architecture for a synthesis between a traditional view of man and a view of man emerging from new psychological and economic knowledge. Niebuhr, whose own spiritual sources were the teachings of St. Paul and St. Augustine, came naturally to Pascal and Kierkegaard, but found that the intellectual process could not stop there. This is not to say that Niebuhr expected salvation through revolution, Marxist or Freudian. Coles sees Niebuhr as something of a prophet himself, which is why, perhaps, he was able to recognize the insufficiencies of other prophets.

While Mannheim, Freud, and Niebuhr have enjoyed quite different levels of frame, each has, at one time or another, been widely read. The same cannot be said for Abraham Flexner. As Carleton Chapman says of Flexner's report on medical education, it was "often quoted and seldom read." This does not change the fact that few twentieth-century documents have had greater influence; it would not be too much to say that American medical education (and American medical practice) were virtually transformed as a consequence of the Report. How was it possible for a single individual to achieve his objectives so completely? Chapman offers several explanations, among them, that Flexner knew how to gain attention for his recommendations and knew how to secure financial support for implementing them. His central message was simple—medicine was a science and the medical practitioner ought to be a scientist. When Flexner used the word "science," as Chapman explains, he referred to the natural sciences. He recommended reforms of teaching hospitals and licensing procedures, going so far as to indicate the specific areas in the country where medical schools ought to be located. He was persuaded that these schools ought to be tied to universities or colleges. That the Report was so immensely in-

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fluential is partly explained by its timing; certain of the reforms Flexner proposed were already under way. Also, for a period, the Report stood virtually alone; no other set of recommendations competed with it.

In popular lore, the Flexner Report figures as an unqualified success. In fact, Chapman writes, the success was something less than total. Physicians did not suddenly become scientists; schools of medicine, even when nominally attached to colleges and universities, remain markedly independent in their policies. Also, as medical needs grew, the profession could not remain as limited in its numbers as Flexner had originally hoped. Health insurance had no place in Flexner's system; for him, philanthropy was the basis on which a new and better medicine would be constructed.

The Prussian university, with its medical sciences fully integrated into the other principal academic programs, was clearly Flexner s ideal. To have achieved this ideal in America would have required an institutional metamorphosis that was quite impossible. Flexner, Chapman says, had no feeling for academic politics; he scarcely appreciated the strength of the "territorial" feelings that make each faculty wish to protect its "turf" from encroachments by others. A new "Flexner Report" is obviously called for today, but where, Chapman asks, is a new Flexner to be found?

Jerome Frank, when he published *Law and the Modern Mind* in 1930, had no need to argue for a reform of the American law schools. As Bruce Ackerman explains, the Langdell reforms at Harvard in the 1870's established the principle that law was a science, susceptible to study in a scientific manner. Langdell's purpose had been "not only to rationalize the legal system through a sustained research effort," but also to "teach students to approach their tasks in a scientific spirit." By the 1920's, Ackerman writes, the universities, the bar itself, and the bench were "allied in the pursuit of legal clarity in the name of an ideal society of free individuals."

This "rational" system, however, was never entirely accepted. Ackerman distinguishes three types of dissent from the Langdell system, represented in three generations. The first, which began before the turn of the century, was a rather modest affair, but included among its proponents no less a man than Oliver Wendell Holmes. These critics, Ackerman writes, "denied the assumption of the scientific school that the Common Law had a fundamental structure discernible by the architectonic intelligence." They maintained instead that "legal doctrine was basically the historical product of social conflict and political compromise." A second generation, which included Louis Brandeis, Felix Frankfurter, and Roscoe Pound, was principally influenced by Progressive politics and Deweyite pragmatism. These men "emphasized the need for social experiment" and insisted that state power had to be shaped so that old values were in fact given new meaning under modern conditions.

Ackerman's principal interest, however, is with the third generation of dissent—the so-called Legal Realists—who began to surface in the 1920's and came to enjoy a certain prominence in the 1930's. Jerome Frank's *Law and the Modern Mind*, Ackerman writes, "is probably the most comprehensive Realist effort to expose the fallacies involved in the Classical effort to state legal rules clearly and to systematize them around fundamental legal principles." Frank, a Freudian, believed

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that "the fundamental problem for the legal profession was not intellectual but emotional." Lawyers and judges, Frank believed, would do well "to look within themselves and seek to understand the nonrational wellsprings of their own conduct." A difficult case could not be decided by "reasoning from asserted legal principles." Not all the Realists were wedded so totally to Freudian explanations; some preferred to use the tools of political science, anthropology, or statistics. Whatever their approach, however, they all "denied the autonomy of legal science and sought to expose it as a smokescreen disguising the realities of human motivation and interaction among legal decision-makers." The Realists, while not highly regarded by the legal establishment, raised the kinds of questions that led in the 1940's to the creation of the Legal Process School. One of its principal concerns was to raise questions about whether the courts were the appropriate institutions for pronouncing on issues of social importance. "The Legal Process School," Ackerman writes, "sees the articulation of social philosophy as a task for the political, not the judicial, process because the executive and the legislature, unlike the courts, are directly responsible to the people through the democratic process."

In Ackerman's view, Jerome Frank's philosophy was particularly suited to the intellectual, political, and legal conditions of the 1930's. The Depression had "discredited laissez-faire individualism, but no alternative social theory had emerged which provided an acceptable account of the law's role in achieving a just society." Ackerman suggests that what Frank sought with respect to the law was not too different from what Stravinsky, Picasso, Joyce, Einstein, and Freud were seeking to do in the arts and sciences. Each of them, Ackerman writes, "radically challenged the effort to structure objective reality into a single determinate rationalizable order." They were all striking out—each in his own way—at the simpler concepts of rationality that their predecessors had favored and accepted.

George Santayana's *Three Philosophical Poets*, Michael Putnam writes, is not so much a work of philosophy as a work of literary criticism. Santayana chose Lucretius, Dante, and Goethe as his principal subjects. Lucretius, as much as any poet, emphasized the mutability of life, the flux that is the essential characteristic of nature. Santayana, according to Putnam, was unable to accept entirely the gloom and tension implicit in Lucretius; he insisted on pressing for his own belief that order and balance exist in nature and in life. He refused to acknowledge the presence of the irrational in much of the thought of classical antiquity. Nor was he able to recognize the deeper levels of thought in the man he admired as the "poet of nature."

Dante, who, for Santayana, is the "poet of salvation," arouses more feelings of familiarity, indeed, of congeniality in Santayana. Yet, this does not lead him to speak at all favorably of the *Inferno*. This is the part of the *Divine Comedy* that Santayana finds most troubling. Why? Because, according to Putnam, it offends Santayana's idealism; he cannot stand its vulgarities, its physicality. Putnam suggests that it "upset Santayana's innate feelings of decorum and justice." He is happier dealing with *Purgatory*, and happiest with *Paradise*. In that part, Putnam writes, "man at last enhances the best in his own nature to become absorbed in an ideal." Santayana,

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the "optimist, realist, and harmonizing seeker after truth," was able to appreciate the greatness of Dante's poetry, despite the fact that he found parts of the work inimical to his own philosophy.

Goethe, "the poet of existence," is the writer who appreciates "human life in its immediacy, treated romantically." Santayana is not much impressed with Goethe's "formless" Faust. As Putnam explains, Santayana's "naturalism is repelled by Faust's moments of visionary transcendence while his idealism is offended by the hero's often immoral path through experience." Santayana, Putnam writes, "typified an already dying generation of scholar-aesthetes who professed to find beauty and integrity as primary concerns in life and art. We, on the other hand, are obsessed by ugliness, paradox and ambiguity." Santayana could not escape from his own idealism; it was the prison that blinded his vision.

In considering *A Vision*, by William Butler Yeats, Joan Carberg suggests that this supernaturally inspired cosmology was an attempt "to create some coherent body of faith." Yeats, unable to accept any existing theology, worked to invent one of his own. It was not a system that he truly and completely believed in, but it was something more than a commentary on his own poems. On one level, Carberg explains, it is a description of the kinds of people whose character is associated with each of the twenty-eight phases of the moon; on another level, it is a highly original interpretation of history by a man who admitted that his knowledge of history was limited. This did not deter him. Yeats, like Spengler, believed that modern culture was coming to an end; more than that, he believed that a complete dissolution was in prospect. If *A Vision* is something more than a congeries of imaginative symbols and images, Carberg writes, it is, in good part, because the work helps to illuminate the poems and plays that are Yeats' most enduring legacy.

The *Dædalus* collection of twentieth-century classics does not admit of easy categorization. If reviews on works by Edward Sapir, Max Weber, H. G. Wells, and George Lukacs had arrived in time, the volume might have had a somewhat different quality. They would not, however, have altered the fact that such a preponderance of the works considered in the volume implicitly or explicitly assert the primacy of the imagination; it is not entirely an accident that the volume opens with Spengler and concludes with Yeats. While neither can be said to be a paradigmatic figure of the twentieth century, both express fundamental truths about certain of its intellectual predispositions. So, in various ways, do many of the other books discussed in this volume. An intellectual portrait of the century might well be constructed out of the materials considered in this volume.

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S.R.G.

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NORTHROP FRYE

The Decline of the West by Oswald Spengler

In July, 1918, when the German armies were on the point of collapse, a book appeared called *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, by someone called Oswald Spengler. I use that phrase because Spengler then was nobody in particular, an *Oberlehrer* or *Gymnasium* teacher who had thrown up his job in 1910 in order to write, whose health was so bad he was never called up for military service even in the warm-body months of 1918, and who was so poor he could hardly buy enough food or clothing, much less books. Anonymity was a serious handicap in a country where scholars were ranked in a quasi-military hierarchy, and Spengler's book was refused by many publishers before being brought out in a small edition. Within a year it was one of the most widely read and discussed books in Europe, and Spengler began to revise and expand it. He was decoyed into other projects before he completed his masterwork, but finally did complete it with a second volume, as long and detailed as the first. The second volume, however, adds relatively little to the essential argument, though it provides more documentation. In 1926 an English translation of the first volume by C. F. Atkinson, called *The Decline of the West*, was published by Alfred A. Knopf, the second volume appearing in 1928. It is an admirable translation, with many helpful footnotes added by the translator. In English there is an excellent study of Spengler by H. Stuart Hughes (1952). It is a short book, but even so it takes in a much wider sweep of argument than I can take here: I am concerned only with *The Decline of the West* as a "revisited classic."

The philosophical framework of Spengler's argument is a Romantic one, derived ultimately from Fichte's adaptation of Kant. The objective world, the world that we know and perceive, the phenomenal world, is essentially a spatial world: it is the domain of Nature explored by science and mathematics, and so far as it is so explored, it is a mechanical world, for when living things are seen objectively they are seen as

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mechanisms. Over against this is the world of time, organism, life and history. The essential reality of this world eludes the reasoner and experimenter: it is to be attained rather by feeling, intuition, imaginative insight, and, above all, by symbolism. The time in which this reality exists is a quite different time from the mechanical or clock time of science, which is really a dimension of space. It follows that methods adequate for the study of nature are not adequate for the study of history. The true method of studying living forms, Spengler says, is by analogy, and his whole procedure is explicitly and avowedly analogical. The problem is to determine what analogies in history are purely accidental, and which ones point to the real shape of history itself. Thanks to such works as Bernard Lonergan's *Insight* (1957), we know rather more about the positive role of analogy in constructive thought than was generally known in 1918, and it is no longer possible to dismiss Spengler contemptuously as "mystical" or "irrational" merely because his method is analogical. He may be, but for other reasons.

Everything that is alive shows an organic rhythm, moving through stages of birth, growth, maturity, decline and eventual death. If this happens to all individual men without exception, there is surely no inherent improbability in supposing that the same organic rhythm extends to larger human units of life. In Spengler's day, philosophy was still largely dominated by the Cartesian model of the individual perceiver completely detached from his social context. But this is an unreal abstraction, however useful as a heuristic principle; man also perceives as a representative of a larger social unit. The next step is to identify that unit. Spengler finds that it is not the nation, which is too shifting and fluctuating to be a unit, not the race (though he wobbles on this point, for reasons to be examined presently), not the class, which is a source mainly of limitation and prejudice, not the continent, but the culture. The culture to which we belong is the "Western" culture, with its roots in Western Europe, though now extended to the Americas and Australia.

This culture has gone through four main stages, which Spengler symbolizes by the seasons of the year. It had its "spring" in medieval times, and the features of such a cultural spring are a warrior aristocracy, a priesthood, a peasantry bound to the soil, a limited urban development, anonymous and impersonal art, mainly in the service of the priests and the fighters (churches and castles), and intense spiritual aspiration. It reached its "summer" with the Renaissance, consolidating in city-states, princes surrounded by courtiers, a growing merchant class, and a high development of the arts in which names and personalities become important. Its "autumn" took place in the eighteenth century, when it began to exhaust its inner possibilities, of music in Mozart and Beethoven, of literature in Goethe, of philosophy in Kant. Then it moved into its "winter" phase, which Spengler calls a "civilization" as distinct from a culture. Here its accomplishments in the arts and philosophy are either a further exhaustion of possibilities or an inorganic repetition of what has been done. Its distinctive energies are now technological. It goes in for great engineering feats, for annihilation wars and dictatorships; its population shifts from the countryside into huge amorphous cities which produce a new kind of mass man. The first significant representative of this winter civilization was Napoleon the

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world-conqueror; Bismarck and Cecil Rhodes the empire-builder are examples of a type of force-man who will increase through the next centuries.

Before this culture we had the Classical culture, which exemplifies the pattern for us, as it completed its winter phase. Classical culture had its "spring" with the Homeric aristocracy, its "summer" with the Greek city-states, and its "autumn" with Periclean Athens and the Peloponnesian War. Plato and Aristotle, corresponding to Goethe and Kant, exhausted the inner organic possibilities of Classical philosophy, and Alexander the world-conqueror corresponds to Napoleon. The break we express by the phrase "Greek and Roman" is now occurring for us; we are now about where Classical culture was at the time of the Punic Wars, with the world-states of the future fighting it out for supremacy. Of these world-states, only the Prussian tradition that runs through Bismarck seems really to have grasped the facts of the contemporary world, and to have embarked on the "self-determination" which Spengler sees as essential to a state in the winter phase of its culture. Although the theme is very muted in *The Decline of the West,* Spengler seems to have a hope—he regards it as a hope—that Germany may yet become the Rome of the future.

In addition to these two cultures, there is a "Magian" one, which comes in between the Classical and the Western. This culture is Arabian, Syrian, Jewish, Byzantine and eastern Levantine generally: it had its "spring" in the time of Jesus, its Baroque expansion in the age of Mohammed, and it began to exhaust its possibilities in what we should call the later Middle Ages. Spengler also identifies an Egyptian, a Chinese, and an Indian culture, all of which have lasted the same length of time and gone through the same phases. A new culture, Spengler says, is growing up in Russia now, and is still (1918) in its springtime phase. When a new culture, however, grows up within the confines or influence of an older one, it is subject to what Spengler calls a "pseudomorphosis," having its genuine shape twisted and deformed by the prestige of its senior. Thus although the "Magian" culture practically took over the Roman Empire, even eventually shifting its center to Byzantium, still the domination of the Classical culture forced it to express itself in many ways that were alien to it. The same thing is happening in Russia now, where the prestige of an aging culture, as Russia's adoption of Marxism shows, is squeezing the indigenous life out of the younger development.

Such cultures differ profoundly from one another, so profoundly that no mind in a Western culture can really understand what is going on in a Classical or Egyptian or Chinese mind. The differences can only be expressed by some kind of central symbol. The Greek is a purely natural man, in Spengler's sense of the word "nature": he cared nothing for past or future, had no history although he invented it for certain occasions, produced his arts without taking thought for the morrow, and lived in the pure present, the symbol of which for Spengler is the Doric column. Spengler suggests primary symbols for most of the other cultures: the garden for the Chinese, who "wanders" in his world; the straight way for the Egyptian, who was as obsessed by past and future life as the Greek was careless of them; the cavern for Magian culture, expressed architecturally as the mosque—the Pantheon in Rome being,

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Spengler says, the first mosque. As Yeats remarks in his *Vision*, taking his cue from Ezra Pound, Spengler probably got his cavern symbol from Frobenius. The new Russian culture is best symbolized as a flat plane: it expresses a "denial of height" in both its architecture and its Communism. The central symbol for the Western, or, as Spengler usually calls it, the "Faustian" culture seems to be that of a center with radiating points. Faustian culture is strongly historical in sense, with a drive into infinite distance that makes it unique among other cultures. The central art of Faustian man is contrapuntal music; Classical culture expressed its sense of the pure present in its sculpture. The approaches of the two cultures even to mathematics are quite different. Classical man thinks of a number as a thing, a magnitude; Western man thinks of it as a relation to other numbers.

This morphological view of history, which sees history as a plurality of cultural developments, is, Spengler claims, an immense improvement on the ordinary "linear" one which divides history into ancient, medieval, and modern periods. Here Spengler seems to me to be on very solid ground, at least to the extent that linear history is really, at bottom, a vulgar and complacent assumption that we represent the inner purpose of all human history. The Hebrews gave us our religion, the Greeks our philosophy, the Romans our law, and these contributions to our welfare descended from the Middle Ages to us. The Chinese and Indians had little to do with producing us; they only produced more Chinese and Indians, so they don't really belong to history. "Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay," as the man says in Tennyson. Hegel has been often and most unfairly ridiculed for advocating a view of history which made the Prussian state of his day its supreme achievement. But whenever we adopt this linear view, especially in its progressive form, which asserts that the later we come in time the better we are, we do far worse than Hegel. The linear view of history is intellectually dead, and Spengler has had a by no means ignoble role in assisting at its demise.

Spengler's view of history includes, however, a rather similar distinction between human life with history and human life without it. If we study the history of one of the great cultures, we find that institutions evolve, classes rise, and conquests expand in what seems a logical, but is really an organic, way. But if we try to write a history of Patagonians or Zulus or Mongols, we can produce only a series of events or incidents. These people live and die and reproduce; they trade and think and fight as we do; they make poems and pots and buildings. But their stories are chronicles or annals, not coherent histories. Lapland in the eighteenth century is much like Lapland in the thirteenth: we do not feel, as we feel when we compare eighteenth-century with thirteenth-century England, that it is five centuries *older*. Similarly, after a culture has completely exhausted itself, it passes out of "history." There are, therefore, two forms of human life: a primitive existence with the maximum of continuity and the minimum of change, and life within a growing or declining culture, which is history properly speaking.

A parallel distinction reappears within the cultural developments themselves. People have constantly been fascinated by the degree of accident in history, by the fact that, as Pascal says, history would have been quite different if Cleopatra's nose

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had been longer. Spengler distinguishes what he calls destiny from incident. The incidents of a man's life will depend on the job he takes, the woman he marries, the town he decides to live in, and these are often determined by sheer accident. But nothing will alter the fact that it will be his life. Cultures, too, have their real lives as well as the incidents those lives bring to the surface. Spengler does not mention Cleopatra's nose, but he does say that if Mark Antony had won the battle of Actium the shape of Magian culture would have been much easier to recognize. The incidents of Western history would have been quite different if Harold had won at Hastings or Napoleon at the Nile, but the same kind of history would have appeared in other forms. A modern reader would doubtless prefer some other word to "destiny," but the distinction itself is valid, granted Spengler's premises. In what a culture produces, whether it is art, philosophy, military strategy, or political and economic developments, there are no accidents: everything a culture produces is equally a symbol of that culture.

Certain stock responses to Spengler may be set aside at once. In the first place, his view of history is not a cyclical view, even if he does use the names of the four seasons to describe its main phases. A cyclical theory would see a mechanical principle, like the one symbolized by Yeats's double gyre, as controlling the life of organisms, and for Spengler the organism is supreme: there is no superorganic mechanism. Brooks Adams's *The Law of Civilization and Decay* (1895), which appears to have wrought such disaster in the impressionable mind of Ezra Pound, does give us a rather crude cyclical theory of history as an alternating series of movements of aggressiveness and usury, with apparently some preference for the former. Yeats's *Vision*, as just implied, is also cyclical, because it is astrological, and therefore sees history as following the mechanical rhythms of nature rather than the organic ones. It seems to me that Spengler's distinction between primitive and historical existence is the real basis of Yeats's distinction between "primary" cultures and the "antithetical" ones that rise out of them, but the spirits who supplied Yeats with his vision did not know much history.

In a way Spengler does give an illusion of a cyclical view: he knows very little about Chinese and Indian civilizations, and relegates the possiblity of other such developments in Babylonia or pre-Columbian America to bare mentions. Fair enough: nobody expects omniscience. But this leaves us with a series of five that do run in sequence: the Egyptian, the Classical, the Magian, the Western, and the Russian. This sequence may have its importance, as I shall suggest later, but for Spengler himself cultures grow up irregularly, like dandelions. There was no inevitability that a new Russian culture would appear in the decline of a Western one, nor is there any carryover of contrasting characteristics from one to the other (except in the negative and distorting form of "pseudomorphosis"), such as a genuinely cyclical theory would postulate.

Spengler's analogical method of course rests, not only on the analogies among the cultures themselves, but on a further analogy between a culture and an organism. It is no good saying that a culture is not an organism, and that therefore we can throw out his whole argument. The question whether a culture "is" an

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organism or not belongs to what I call the fallacy of the unnecessary essence. It is an insoluble problem, and insoluble problems are insoluble because they have been wrongly formulated. The question is not whether a culture is an organism, but whether it behaves enough like one to be studied on an organic model. "Let the words youth, growth, maturity, decay . . . be taken at last as objective descriptions of organic states," Spengler says. Spengler's massed evidence for these characteristics in a variety of cultures seems to me impressive enough to take seriously. It is no good either denouncing him on the ground that his attitude is "fatalistic" or "pessimistic," and that one ought not to be those things. It is not fatalism to say that one grows older every year; it is not pessimism to say that whatever is alive will eventually die. Or if it is, it doesn't matter.

Again, I am not much worried about the "contradictions" or "ambiguities," which can probably be found by job-lots in Spengler's work. Anybody can find contradictions in any long and complex argument. Most of them are verbal only, and disappear with a little application to the real structure of the argument itself. Most of the rest arise from the fact that the reader's point of view differs from that of the writer, and he is apt to project these differences into the book as inconsistencies within it. There may remain a number of genuine contradictions which really do erode the author's own case, and I think there are some in Spengler. But for a book of the kind he wrote the general principle holds that if one is in broad sympathy with what he is trying to do, no errors or contradictions or exaggerations seem fatal to the general aim; if one is not in sympathy with it, everything, however correct in itself, dissolves into chaos.

Spengler's book is not a work of history; it is a work of historical popularization. It outlines one of the mythical shapes in which history reaches everybody except professional historians. Spengler would not care for the term popularization: he is proud of the length and difficulty of his work, speaks with contempt of the popular; and of his efforts to popularize his own thesis, such as *Prussianism and Socialism* (1919) or *Man and Technics* (1931), the less said the better. Nevertheless, his book is addressed to the world at large, and historians are the last people who should be influenced by it. What Spengler has produced is a vision of history which is very close to being a work of literature—close enough, at least, for me to feel some appropriateness in examining it as a literary critic. If *The Decline of the West* were nothing else, it would still be one of the world's great Romantic poems. There are limits to this, of course: Spengler had no intention of producing a work of *pure* imagination, nor did he do so. A work of literature, as such, cannot be argued about or refuted, and Spengler's book has been constantly and utterly refuted ever since it appeared. But it won't go away, because in sixty years there has been no alternative vision of the data it contemplates.

What seems to me most impressive about Spengler is the fact that everybody does accept his main thesis in practice, whatever they think or say they accept. Everybody thinks in terms of a "Western" culture to which Europeans and Americans belong; everybody thinks of that culture as old, not young; everybody realizes that its most striking parallels are with the Roman period of Classical

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culture; everybody realizes that some crucial change in our way of life took place around Napoleon's time. At that I am not counting the people who have a sentimental admiration for medieval culture because it represents our own lost youth, or the people who cannot listen with pleasure to any music later than Mozart or Beethoven, or the people who regard the nineteenth century as a degenerate horror, or the Marxists who talk about the decadence of bourgeois culture, or the alarmists who talk about a return to a new Dark Ages, or the Hellenists who regard Latin literature as a second-hand imitation of Greek literature. All these have a more or less muddled version of Spengler's vision as their basis. The decline, or aging, of the West is as much a part of our mental outlook today as the electron or the dinosaur, and in that sense we are all Spenglerians.

Thus T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, published in 1922, was written without reference to Spengler, an author of whom Eliot would not be likely to take an exalted view. But look at the imagery of the poem:

spring	summer	autumn	winter
morning	noon	evening	night
youth	maturity	age	death
spring rain	river Thames	estuary	sea
Middle Ages	Elizabethans	18th century	20th century

The medieval references, it is true, come mainly through Wagner, and the eighteenth-century section was cut out on the advice of Pound, but the Spenglerian analogy is there in full force. The parallels with Classical culture are also there, even to the explicit allusion to the Punic Wars in the reference to the "ships at Mylae." W. H. Auden's "The Fall of Rome," and much of the imagery of *For the Time Being* are unintelligible without some comprehension, however slight, of Spengler's thesis. Similarly with many poems of Yeats and Pound, where the influence of Spengler is more conscious, especially in Yeats. James Thurber tells us of a man who read somewhere that if one did not acquire sexual knowledge from one's parents one got it out of the gutter, so, having learned nothing from his parents, he undertook an exhaustive analysis of the gutters of several American cities. In other areas we can be more fortunate. If we do not acquire our knowledge of Spengler's vision from Spengler we have to get it out of the air, but get it we will; we have no choice in the matter.

For students of English literature, at least, the most famous attack on Spengler occurs in Wyndham Lewis's *Time and Western Man*, as part of his general onslaught on the "time philosophy." And a most instructive attack it is. In the first place, we notice that Lewis has no alternative philosophy. He makes vague remarks about attaching more importance to space and painting and less to time and music, and says such things as "I am for the physical world." But his book is actually a quite lucid, often brilliant, example of the very procedure he proposes to attack. He shows how twentieth-century philosophy, literature, politics, popular entertainment, music and ballet, and half a dozen other social phenomena all form a single interwoven texture

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of "time philosophy," and are all interchangeable symbols of it. We are thus not surprised to find that Lewis's targets of attack are formative influences on his other work, as Joyce influenced his fiction and Bergson his theory of satire. And as *Time and Western Man* is really a Spenglerian book, doing essentially the kind of thing Spengler would do, including taking a hostile and polemical tone toward most contemporary culture, we are not surprised either to find that Lewis seldom comes to grips with Spengler's actual arguments. He does make some effective points, such as showing how a *Zeitgeist* patter can rationalize irresponsible political leadership by explaining that history says it's "time" for another war. But this would apply to a lot of people besides Spengler. What Lewis mainly attacks and ridicules are Spengler's sound effects.

It is true that Spengler's sound effects are sometimes hard to take, and the reason for their existence brings us to a problem that the literary critic is constantly having to face. I have elsewhere tried to show that it is intellectually dishonest to call a man's work reactionary, whatever his personal attitudes may have been, because it is the use made of it by others that will determine whether it will be reactionary or not. The pseudocritic is constantly looking for some feature of a writer's attitude, inside or outside his books, that will enable him to plaster some ready-made label on his author. Genuine criticism is a much more difficult and delicate operation, especially in literature, where a man may be a great poet and still be little better than an idiot in many of his personal attitudes.

In a large number, at least, of important writers we find an imagination which makes them important, and something else, call it an ego, which represents the personality trying to *say* something, to assert and argue and impress. A great deal of criticism revolves around the problem of trying to separate these two elements. We have Eliot the poet and Eliot the snob; Pound the poet and Pound the crank; Yeats the poet and Yeats the poseur; Lawrence the poet and Lawrence the hysteric. Further back, Milton, Pope, Blake, Shelley, Whitman, all present aspects of personality so distasteful to some critics that they cannot really deal critically with their poetry at all. For somebody on the periphery of literature, like Spengler, the task of separation is still more difficult, and requires even more patience. It does a writer no service to pretend that the things which obstruct his imagination are not there, or, if there, can be rationalized or explained away. In my opinion Spengler has a permanent place in twentieth-century thought, but so far as his reputation is concerned, he was often his own worst enemy, and a stupid and confused Spengler is continually getting in the way of the genuine prophet and visionary.

We may suspect, perhaps, some illegitimate motivation in Spengler's writing, some desire to win the war on the intellectual front after being left out of the army. It would be easy to make too much of this, but he does say in the preface to the revised edition that he has produced what he is "proud to call *a German philosophy*" (italics original), although the real thesis of his book is that there are no German philosophies, only Western ones. In any case, he belonged all his life to the far right of the German political spectrum, and carried a load of the dismal *Völkisch* imbecilities that played so important a part in bringing Hitler to power. Hitler in fact

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represents something of a nemesis for Spengler the prophet, even though Spengler died in 1936, before Hitler had got really started on his lemming march. Unless he has unusual sources of information, a prophet is well advised to stick to analyzing the present instead of foretelling the future. Spengler wanted and expected a German leader in the Bismarckian and Prussian military tradition, and he doubted whether this screaming *lumpen-Künstler* was it. He greeted the Nazis in a book called in English *The Hour of Decision* (1933), which the Nazis, when they got around to reading it, banned from circulation. But his general political attitude was sufficiently close to Nazism to enable him to die in his bed.

These personal attitudes account for many of the more unattractive elements in his rhetoric, which has all the faults of a prophetic style: harsh, dogmatic, prejudiced, certain that history will do exactly what he says, determined to rub his reader's nose into all the toughness and grimness of his outlook. He has little humor, though plenty of savage and sardonic wit, and a fine gift for gloomy eloquence. He is fond of murky biological language, like calling man a "splendid beast of prey," and much of his imagery is Halloween imagery, full of woo-woo noises and shivery Wagnerian winnies about the "dark" goings-on of nature and destiny. Thus:

> With the formed state, high history also lays itself down weary to sleep. Man becomes a plant again, adhering to the soil, dumb and enduring. The timeless village and the "eternal" peasant reappear, begetting children and burying seed in Mother Earth. . . . There, in the souls, world-peace, the peace of God, the bliss of grey-haired monks and hermits, is become actual—and there alone. It has awakened that depth in the endurance of suffering which the historical man in the thousand years of his development has never known. Only with the end of grand History does holy, still Being reappear. It is a drama noble in its aimlessness, noble and aimless as the course of the stars, the rotation of the earth, and alternance of land and sea, of ice and virgin forest upon its face. We may marvel at it or we may lament it—but it is there.

It may not be everybody's poetry, but it is genuine enough of its kind. But occasionally we come across elements connected with this kind of rhetoric that are more objectionable. For example, Spengler knows that his argument really has nothing to do with the conception of "race," and in *The Hour of Decision* he makes it clear—well, fairly clear—that he regards the Nazi attitude to race as suicidal frenzy. But he *cannot* give up the notion that Jews are a separate entity: if he did, one of the most dearly cherished *Völkisch* prejudices would go down the drain:

> Spinoza, a Jew and therefore, spiritually, a member of the Magian Culture, could not absorb the Faustian force-concept at all, and it has no place in his system. And it is an astounding proof of the secret power of root-ideas that Heinrich Hertz, the only Jew amongst the great physicists of the recent past, was also the only one of them who tried to resolve the dilemma of mechanics by eliminating the idea of force.

According to Spengler's own thesis, a man who spends his life in seventeenth-century Holland belongs to the Western Baroque, whatever his religious or racial affinities. Most of Spinoza's contemporaries called themselves Christians, which is equally a "Magian" religion according to Spengler. But of course one never knows when such a prejudice will come in handy. "It is something fundamental in the essence of the Magian soul that leads the Jew, as entrepreneur and engineer, to stand

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aside from the creation proper of machines and devote himself to the business side of their production." This remark follows closely on a critique of Marx. As the Nazis said, capitalism and communism are both Jewish inventions. The biological function of women is also a fruitful topic for dark symbolization:

> Endless Becoming is comprehended in the idea of Motherhood. Woman as Mother *is* Time and *is* Destiny. Just as the mysterious act of depth-experience fashions, out of sensation, extension and world, so through motherhood the bodily man is made an individual member of this world, in which thereupon he *has* a Destiny. All symbols of Time and Distance are also symbols of maternity. *Care* is the root-feeling of future, and all care is motherly.

It is little surprise to learn that Ibsen's Nora "is the very type of the provincial derailed by reading." That is, if Nora had really responded to the *Zeitgeist*, and understood that she *was* Time and Destiny, she would have done nothing so unfeminine as read books, but would have remained illiterate, pregnant, and absorbed in her doll-house.

There is also the unnecessary value judgement implied in the word "decline" itself. Strictly speaking, according to Spengler Western art is not getting any better or worse as it changes from medieval to Renaissance to Baroque conventions; it is simply growing older. But Spengler wants it to decline and exhaust its possibilities, because he wants his contemporaries, at least the German ones, to devote themselves to the things required by their cultural age, which for him are technological, national socialist, and military:

> I would sooner have the fine mind-begotten forms of a fast steamer, a steel structure, a precision-lathe, the subtlety and elegance of many chemical and optical processes, than all the pickings and stealings of present-day "arts and crafts," architecture and painting included. I prefer one Roman aqueduct to all Roman temples and statues. . . .

The Romans who built aqueducts and carried out huge massacres and purges also produced Lucretius, Virgil, Ovid, Horace and Catullus. Not one of these names appears in Spengler's indexes (except Horace by courtesy of the translator). He would say, with the Hellenists mentioned above, that Latin poetry was an inorganic repetition of Greek poetry, but it wasn't. But, of course, for him as for others the word "decline" is an easy way of dismissing anything in the contemporary arts that one finds puzzling or disturbing. When Spengler's book was published, the fashionable myth was the myth of progress, and Spengler's evidence that technological advance could just as easily be seen as a hardening of the cultural arteries was useful as a counterweight. But its usefulness, like so many other things in history, has exhausted its possibilities now that this aspect of technology is obvious to everybody.

After all this has been said, and a great deal more that could be said taken for granted, it is still true that very few books, in my experience, have anything like Spengler's power to expand and exhilarate the mind. The boldness of his leaping imagination, the kaleidoscopic patterns that facts make when he throws them together, the sense of the whole of human thought and culture spread out in front of one, the feeling that the blinkers of time and space have been removed from one's inward

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eyes when Greek sculptors are treated as the "contemporaries" of Western composers, all make up an experience not easily duplicated. I first encountered him as an undergraduate, and I think this is the best time to read him, because his perspective is long range and presbyopic, and his specific judgments all too often wrong headed. Some of his comparative passages, such as his juxtaposing of colors in Western painting with tonal effects in Western music, read almost like free association. Any number of critics could call these comparisons absurd or mystical balderdash. But Spengler has the power to challenge the reader's imagination, as critics of that type usually have not, and he will probably survive them all even if all of them are right.

The best-known philosophy of history after Spengler, at least in English, is that of Arnold Toynbee, whose *Study of History* began appearing while Spengler was still alive. Toynbee has twenty-one cultures to Spengler's seven or eight, and twenty of them follow, more or less, Spengler's organic scheme of youth, maturity, decline (accompanied by a "time of troubles") and dissolution. But the twenty-first is Toynbee's own Western culture, and that one has just got to be different: to assume that it will go the way of the others would be "fatalism," which is what he professes to object to in Spengler. So he develops a "challenge and response" theory which enables him to use a mechanical metaphor instead of an organic one at the stage corresponding to "decline," and talk of "breakdown" instead. But the sequence of genesis, growth, breakdown and disintegration in Toynbee seems more jumbled than Spengler's consistently organic model. He begins his discussion of the causes of "breakdown," at the beginning of Volume Four, with a critique of Spengler which has all the air of a dodged issue. He says that it is too early to say whether Western culture has come to its "time of troubles" yet, which is quite a statement to make in 1939; he says Spengler is a "fatalist," which as we have seen is irrelevant, and he says that Spengler treats a metaphor as though it were a fact. But every historical overview of this kind, including Toynbee's, is and has to be metaphorical. When we look at Toynbee's own table of contents we find "nemesis of creativity," "schism and palingenesis," "withdrawal and return," and if those are not metaphors I don't know the meaning of the word. He also seems to feel that ignoring Spengler's distinction between destiny and incident will give more sense of freedom to man by putting more emphasis on the accidental factors of history. There is of course a great deal that is of value and interest in Toynbee's books, but as a Spenglerian revisionist he seems to me to be something of a bust. Except for one thing.

That one thing is his account of the passing of Classical into Western culture. He says that when a culture dies it forms an internal and an external proletariat. The late Roman Empire had its internal proletariat in the bread-and-circus mobs of Rome and the other big cities, and its external proletariat in the Goths and Vandals breaking through the periphery of the Empire. Out of these two forms of proletariat there emerged a "Universal Church," which acted as the tomb of the old culture and the womb of the new one. Spengler also speaks of a "second religiousness" which enters a culture in its final stages: it seems to be one of his most useful and suggestive ideas. But he thinks of Toynbee's internal proletariat simply as a rabble: "The mass is the end, the radical nullity," he says. He overlooks both the connection of primitive

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Christianity with the proletariat and its extraordinary power of organization. It seems to me that Toynbee gives a more rational explanation of the historical role of Christianity in this period than Spengler gives. He ignores Spengler's "Magian" intermediate culture, but his own view does not necessarily do away with it: it merely points to something else that was also happening, to different aspects of what was happening, and to a process which would also account for the "cavern" imagery that Spengler associates with Byzantine culture. It also provides a means of explaining something very important that Spengler leaves out.

This is the curious fascination of Western culture with the idea of making itself into a reborn Classical culture. In its "spring" period its poets devoted great energies to recreating the visions of Virgil and Ovid; in its political life, it revolved around the conception of a reborn Augustus, a Christianized Roman Emperor. Why is the central mythical figure of English literature King Arthur, who has so vague and hazy a historical existence? At best he was merely a local British leader making a temporary rally against the Saxons, who of course won in the end. Why not make more of, say, Alfred, who really was a great man, and whose historical existence is not open to doubt? When we read in Geoffrey of Monmouth that Arthur conquered the armies of Rome, and remember that his colleague in romance was Charlemagne, we get a clue: he is a prototype of the reborn Christian Caesar, the Holy Roman Emperor. This symbolism of recreating Classical culture reaches its climax with the Renaissance, a word which means the "rebirth" of Classicism. It is highly significant that Spengler is rather silly about the Renaissance, which he treats as an un-German interruption of the development of German Gothic into German Baroque. He also seems unaware of the extent to which the same idea dominated, to or past the verge of obsession, a long series of German writers, from Winckelmann through Hölderlin to Nietzsche and George, the last two of whom Spengler certainly knew well. Of course Toynbee's death and rebirth pattern does introduce a more cyclical element into history than Spengler admits. Vico is often regarded as a precursor of Spengler, though I see no evidence that Spengler had read him, but Toynbee brings us much closer to what Vico means by the *ricorso* than anything in Spengler.

If one culture can recreate another one in this way, we have to abandon what seems to me in any case a profoundly unacceptable element in Spengler's argument: his insistence that every culture is a windowless monad, and cannot be genuinely influenced by another culture. "To the true Russian the basic proposition of Darwinism is as devoid of meaning as that of Copernicus is to a true Arab." This remark may be a curious anticipation of the Lysenko business in Stalinist Russia, but on the whole such observations are clearly nonsense: there are a lot of Arabs who know that the earth goes round the sun, and they are not bogus ones. In fact science, in general, is the great obstacle to Spengler's cultural solipsism. Granted that different cultures will construct different scientific world-pictures, there is an obviously translatable quality in science, which makes its principles quite as comprehensible to Chinese or Indians as to Germans or Americans. Such science might even develop a world view on a supercultural scale. We notice that Spengler casts some uneasy glances at what he calls "the ruthlessly cynical hypothesis of the Relativity theory." He tries to see it, of course, as "exhausting the possibilities" of

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Western science, but he seems to be not quite sure that its view of time will be content to confine itself to the world of measurement and stay out of his dark existential territory.

Apart from this, however, perhaps the fact that Western culture has spread over the world means something more than simply the capacity for expansion which Spengler assigns to the Faustian spirit. If science is a universal structure of knowledge, it can help mankind to break out of culture-group barriers. Spengler of course thinks this is a pipe dream, and insists that the people of Asia and Africa have no interest in Western science or technology except as a means of destroying the West. But Marx is a far more effective prophet in the world today than Spengler, and the reason is that he emphasizes something uniform and global in the human situation. The factors which are the same throughout the world, such as the exploitation of labor, have always been, if not less important, at any rate less powerful in history than conflicts of civilizations. Now they are more important, and growing in power. The industrial revolution brings a new factor into the situation which cannot be wholly absorbed into a dialectic of separate "cultures," important as those have been. The question whether Western civilization will survive, decline or break down is out of date, for the world is trying to outgrow the conception of "a" civilization, and reach a different kind of perspective.

If the death-to-rebirth transition from Classical to Western culture happened once, something similar could happen again in our day, though the transition would be to something bigger than another culture. This would imply three major periods of human existence: the period of primitive societies, the period of the organic cultures, and a third period now beginning. Spengler, we saw, attacks and ridicules the three-period view of ancient, medieval and modern ages with, we said, a good deal of justification. But he also remarks that the notion of three ages has had a profound appeal to the Faustian consciousness, from Joachim of Floris in the thirteenth century onward. It is possible that what is now beginning to take shape is the real "Third Reich," of which the Nazis produced so hideous a parody.

The detail of Spengler's vision is all around us, in the restless wandering of great masses of people, in the violence and overcrowding of our almost unmanageable cities, in the strong ethical sense in some social areas, which Spengler compares with Buddhism in India and Stoicism in Rome, neutralized by dictatorships and police states in others, in the "second religiousness" of Oriental cults and the like, in the brutality and vacuousness of our standard forms of entertainment, in the physical self-indulgence paralleling the Roman cult of the bath, in the rapid series of vogues and fashions in the arts which distract us from their inner emptiness. It would be disastrous to pretend that these are not features of cultural aging. It would be still more disastrous to underestimate the powerful inertia in society that wants to "decline" still further, give up the freedom that demands responsibility, and drop out of history. What Spengler said would happen is happening, to a very considerable degree. But while Spengler is one of our genuine prophets, he is not our definitive prophet: other things are also happening, in areas that still invite our energies and loyalties and are not marked off with the words "too late."

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The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire by Michael Ivanovitch Rostovtzeff

In 1926 the Oxford University Press published in a single thick volume one of the most provocative and influential studies of classical civilization to appear in the present century. The volume did not meet with universal acclaim, and indeed its severest critic sat in Oxford; but historians and classical scholars at the time were well aware of its monumental importance. Its author was a massively erudite Russian exile who had recently become Sterling Professor of Ancient History at Yale University. Michael Ivanovitch Rostovtzeff was an arrogant man, but even those who disliked him the most eventually had to admit that he was an intellectual titan and that, for all its errors *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* was a masterpiece. In 1931 a revised edition of the book appeared in German, and two years later an Italian edition appeared with still further revisions. In 1957, with Rostovtzeff dead, Peter Fraser published a new edition of the English text, incorporating the revisions in the German and Italian versions. A second English edition had been undertaken at the request of the Oxford University Press. As Fraser wrote in his preface, "Rostovtzeff's work has become a classic, if not necessarily a wholly correct, account of the subject with which it deals." Today there is probably not one reputable historian who would accept the basic thesis of Rostovtzeff's book. Few, however, would question the greatness of his work.

To understand Rostovtzeff's contribution to ancient history and to evaluate it fairly, the reader is obliged to assess the man himself; for despite its vast apparatus of scholarship and its monstrous footnotes, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* is, like many seminal works, highly personal in character. When, later in life, Rostovtzeff came to write his second masterpiece, *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, his perspective was much clearer and his control of the evidence more balanced, with the result that this work is less controversial. Yet Rostovtzeff's major influence began with the Roman volume and was

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all the stronger for its idiosyncrasy. Rostovtzeff's daring in offering an entirely new explanation for the fall of the Roman Empire was what stunned and irritated scholars in 1926, and the explanation for that daring lies in Rostovtzeff's own past.

Rostovtzeff was born near Kiev in 1870 and fled from Russia in 1918. He was, in other words, nearly fifty years old when he went into exile. His great work was all done after he left. In Russia Rostovtzeff was a good hard-working scholar, but it is likely that if he had remained there he would be known today only to a limited circle of professional ancient historians. The uprooting in middle age seems to have provided the painful insecurity which ultimately sharpened Rostovtzeff's vision of human society. As Arnaldo Momigliano has written, "It is safe to assume that the exile made Rostovtzeff the great man he was."[1]

The classical education which Rostovtzeff received first in Kiev, and later in St. Petersburg, was of a high order.[2] His own father was an exacting Latin teacher; and the historian Zhebelov, the Latinist Zielinski, and the art historian Kondakov were among the finest professors in their fields. Two distinctive features of Rostovtzeff's work can be traced to these early teachers: his scrupulous attention to philological detail in handling evidence in ancient languages and his keen awareness of the importance of nonliterary evidence for writing ancient history. The combination of philology and archaeology helped Rostovtzeff to break through the conventional barriers of classical scholarship and to open up new areas of historical investigation, liberated from old-fashioned antiquarianism. As a university student, Rostovtzeff was drawn to new rather than traditional areas of research. He wrote a thesis on Pompeii in the light of new excavations and after graduation promptly went to Pompeii to see the evidence with his own eyes.

Then, as later, Rostovtzeff was an indefatigable traveler. Between 1895 and 1898 he visited Greece, Turkey, North Africa, Spain, and Italy; and he spent winter months studying in Vienna, London, and Paris. He knew from the start that a historian of the ancient world had to learn topography through his feet and to sense climate through his pores. He never lost his fascination with the stones of the past, whether they were inscribed or not, whether they belonged to shops, temples, theatres, or military camps. Rostovtzeff was tough, as he had to be in order to see the various parts of the ancient world. His fondness for travel and his toughness presaged the magnificent excavation he directed for Yale in the thirties at Dura-Europus on the banks of the Euphrates. Rostovtzeff was a historian who was never content simply to work in a library.

The winters which he devoted to research in this period enlarged Rostovtzeff's knowledge in new and important ways. In Vienna he attended the seminars of Bormann and Benndorf and began his work on the tax-farming system of the Romans. This was his first venture into ancient economic history, and it culminated, in 1902, in his production of an overall history of the system down to the time of Diocletian. Rostovtzeff was able to pursue the subject with success particularly because his visit to England had brought him into contact with Grenfell, a pioneer in the publication of the Egyptian papyri which are so valuable a source for the tax systems of

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Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt. Rostovtzeff's productive encounter with papyrology soon brought him into correspondence with Wilcken in Germany and the papyrological school which he conspicuously encouraged. Meanwhile, Rostovtzeff also developed his skill in the science of numismatics through contact with the leading English scholars in the field (notably Barclay Head) and through a season in the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris. The winters of research, therefore, introduced Rostovtzeff directly to the problems of ancient economic history and at the same time equipped him with the papyrological and numismatic expertise which is indispensable for the study of that subject.

Rostovtzeff's intellectual development in the years from 1895 to 1898 cannot be overestimated. Still in his twenties, he was acquiring firsthand knowledge of the ancient world and new scholarly techniques with a speed which might well have confused an older man. Although the ripening of Rostovtzeff's powers of judgment and interpretation was to come later, as it does with most people, by the turn of the century his erudition was altogether formidable. The more he knew, the more he realized that even the most humble things from antiquity could be instructive. In 1896 he published an article on a lead token (*tessera*) bearing the name of a tax, and from that beginning he went on to explore widely the use and significance of lead tokens in the social and economic history of Rome.

Rostovtzeff's intellectual formation was essentially complete by the time he turned thirty. In the early years of the present century he continued his interest in taxes and tokens, and he picked up a related topic—the tenant farmers of the late Roman Empire—which he had touched upon in 1898. He turned his archaeological talent to South Russia, on which he published a series of studies from 1913 onwards. Rostovtzeff also undertook in these years to do some writing for a popular audience. He never thereafter lost his desire to communicate to a wider readership than that of specialists; and his best work later, including the book under discussion here, clearly betrays an effort to make the text clear to any intelligent reader while the dense and learned notes remain accessible only to professionals.

In 1914 two distinguished classical scholars in Germany, Wilamowitz and Eduard Meyer, invited Rostovtzeff to write a social and economic history of the ancient world. He agreed, but the war and then the Russian Revolution obstructed his work on this project. It represents, however, the opening stage of his achievement of 1926. Rostovtzeff's commitment to the topic was already apparent in his little book *The Birth of the Roman Empire*, written for the Kerensky government in 1918. Perhaps the most important aspect of that book is the palpable link between Rostovtzeff's political experience and his study of the Roman Empire. After Rostovtzeff's flight from Russia that link became even stronger.

Rostovtzeff went to Oxford in 1918 as an exile. He was not happy there. His naturally assertive manner became more abrasive amid the uncertainties of new surroundings and a foreign language. He failed to grasp the gentlemanly precision of Oxford classics. Many an eyebrow must have gone up when Rostovtzeff announced in the winter of 1918-1919 that he would lecture on no less a subject than "The Social and Economic History of Eastern and Western Hellenism, the Roman

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Republic, and the Roman Empire." Together with the immodest grandeur of Rostovtzeff's topic went, perhaps inevitably, an occasional cloudiness of thought. Rostovtzeff was never prepared to admit that this was weakness. In the original preface to *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* he wrote a little defiantly, "Evidently the English mind, in this respect unlike the Slavonic, dislikes a lack of precision in thought or expression."[3]

Hugh Last, who was to become Camden Professor of Ancient History at Oxford, manifestly did not care for Rostovtzeff. "To tell the truth," he wrote of Rostovtzeff's period in England, "in those days his pronunciation of English was, at least in the lecture-room, extremely difficult to understand; and it must be added that, like other unfortunates in exile, remembering that his knowledge was his main claim to consideration he was apt to force it on his listeners in conversation with a vigour which was sometimes thought excessive."[4] In other words, Rostovtzeff was guilty of *bad form*. He had a friend and admirer, however, in J. G. C. Anderson, who preceded Last in the Camden Chair and who presumably advocated the publication of Rostovtzeff's work to the Delegates of the Oxford University Press. In 1922 the Press published *Iranians and Greeks in South Russia,* in 1926 the Roman volume, and in 1926-1927 a two-volume *History of the Ancient World.*

In 1920 Rostovtzeff, feeling himself unwelcome in Oxford and recently rejected for the Camden Chair, moved to America. He took up a position at the University of Wisconsin; in 1925 he moved to Yale. Rostovtzeff was a proud man at an age which, in the best of situations, is difficult, and this was a time of great adjustment and disappointment. He dedicated himself to his work, and the mark of his exile from Russia began to show. Already, in an article published in the *Musée Belge* of 1923, Rostovtzeff had worked out the interpretation of the collapse of the Roman Empire which was to dominate the 1926 volume. That interpretation was rooted firmly in Rostovtzeff's response to the Russian Revolution.

The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire took up the grand theme of Edward Gibbon: decline and fall. Rostovtzeff, however, ascribed the ruin of Rome neither to barbarians at the gates nor to Christianity within. In his view, an alliance of the rural proletariat with the military in the third century A.D. destroyed the beneficent rule of an uban bourgeoisie. This explanation of the end of the Roman Empire is so obviously unsatisfactory that one may well wonder why an acute scholar like Rostovtzeff took it seriously. Clearly he did so because of what he had seen; his own life had convinced him that what he described could actually happen. His passionate attempt to bring the vast resources of his scholarship into line with his view made his book possible, and it may well be that without the impetus of exile Rostovtzeff would never have written so comprehensive a work. Scholars were quick to perceive the origins of Rostovtzeff's theory, and they were no less quick to reject it. The theory itself was vulnerable from many points of view, and so was the jargon in which it was set forth. While repudiating the tenets of Marxism, Rostovtzeff wrote freely and inexactly about "proletariat," "bourgeoisie," and "capitalism." In a review published in 1926 Hugh Last complained, "To the end the reader is left

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wondering what precisely 'capitalism' connotes."[5] Yet in the same review Last was forced to acknowledge, "This is a book of enduring value."

Rostovtzeff's book on the Roman Empire represents the marriage of pre-1918 scholarly training and taste with post-1918 personal experience and reflection. Rostovtzeff wanted desperately to find in the Roman world at its peak (which, like Gibbon, he saw in the Antonine age) the rule of those prosperous middle-class merchants and industrialists he so much admired. He presupposed a capitalist society which itself presupposed the primacy of commerce and industry. Yet that was simply not the way it was.[6] Rostovtzeff could not bring himself to admit the importance of agriculture in antiquity, and he refused to recognize that what he saw as his beloved middle class was not a middle class at all but a ruling class. Indeed, it is arguable that there was no middle class whatsoever in antiquity. The senators of Antonine Rome and the leading citizens of the provincial cities were no bourgeoisie. They were the upper class, and enjoyed its many privileges—legal and otherwise. A substantial number of them were fabulously wealthy.

As to the military which Rostovtzeff imagined to be the enemy of his bourgeoisie, an ineradicable disability in his thinking kept him from studying the gradual metamorphosis of the senatorial order and the workings of social mobility whereby the military and the senate came to be, to some degree, the same. Only in the last decade has the bias of our chief literary source for the middle and late third century become clarified sufficiently for us to re-appraise what happened in that period. Far from destroying the senate, the military commanders saved it and the Empire with it. Syme has gone so far recently as to suggest that the traditionally arch-senatorial emperor Tacitus was actually a military man himself.[7] Of course, Gibbon had formed a just estimate of the third century: he realized that the Empire "was saved by a series of great princes, who derived their origin from the martial provinces of Illyricum." But when Rostovtzeff wrote, as he himself observed in his preface, the second and third centuries A.D. were "the most neglected periods in the history of the Roman Empire." Although that is fortunately no longer the case, it may well have contributed to Rostovtzeff's imperfect understanding of those centuries. Nevertheless, it is especially hard to see how a well-informed scholar could have postulated an alliance between the rural proletariat and the military: such evidence as there is clearly implies a lively fear and dislike of the soldiery on the part of the country people, just as one would expect.

Rostovtzeff's view of the collapse of the Roman Empire soon became and remains a curiosity. Yet today the book in which it was presented is considered a classic work, and it is easier to assess its strengths now than when it appeared. The strengths, like the weaknesses, depend upon the personal characteristics of Rostovtzeff.

The study of the social and economic history of the ancient world by no means began with Rostovtzeff despite his many claims to have had no predecessors in various areas. He had read such books as Salvioli's *Le capitalisme dans le monde antique* (1906) and Cavaignac's *Population et capital dans le monde méditerranéen antique* (1923). What was new in Rostovtzeff's work was his use of archaeological

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evidence. This well-traveled scholar, whose university thesis had been on Pompeii, put his expertise in this area to the service of writing history. The splendid illustrations to his book on the Roman Empire are accompanied by detailed and informative annotations. With his knowledge of monumental remains Rostovtzeff was able to survey authoritatively all the major provinces of the Roman Empire. His chapters on "The City and the Country" throughout the Empire are among his best and have been models for many a chapter on "Town and Country" in later books about the Roman provinces. His infusion of archaeology into historiography is possibly Rostovtzeff's most influential contribution. By the time he wrote his volumes on the Hellenistic World, he had actually led an excavation of his own, and the more profound knowledge of archaeology which he acquired from that experience inevitably and fruitfully left its traces in the later work. Rostovtzeff improved on himself.

The writing of history from archaeological evidence has come a long way since Rostovtzeff, and it is fair to state that this would probably have happened in due course without him. The proliferation of successful excavations at Bronze Age sites in the last decades has made possible a history never known from literary sources. Even so, the exploitation of archaeological material for the periods which Rostovtzeff investigated—periods for which literary evidence is abundant—is still not so widespread as could be wished.

With his philological background Rostovtzeff was able to handle the literary evidence with the same sureness he brought to archaeology. In this respect no one has yet matched him. He read his texts with understanding, discrimination, and due skepticism. His extended discussion of the problem of the imperial biographies in the *Historia Augusta* stands up remarkably well today after a decade of the most thoroughgoing scrutiny those biographies have ever received. "We must, therefore," wrote Rostovtzeff in Chapter Ten, "exercise great caution in using the material supplied by the *Historia Augusta*. If a statement is not corroborated by other and better sources, the right course is to disregard it and to refrain from building any conclusion upon it at all." If other historians had heeded that sound advice, certain pages on Latin literature in Volume Twelve of the *Cambridge Ancient History* might still be worth reading.

Unfortunately for Rostovtzeff, two of the most crucial periods for his history happen to be very poorly documented. One is the age of the emperor Antoninus Pius (A.D. 138-161) and the other is the midthird century A.D. (for which even the *Historia Augusta* is wanting). For Rostovtzeff, the earlier age represented Rome's acme and the latter its season of collapse. For these two periods he had to rely much too heavily on literary texts. Yet it is to his credit that he knew them so well. He drew heavily upon the Roman Oration of the sophist Aristides for the Antonine age and upon an oration to an unnamed emperor whom Rostovtzeff, like other scholars, believed to be Philip the Arab, emperor from A.D. 244 to 249.

The Roman Oration of Aristides is an elaborate rhetorical production designed to flatter the Roman government on the occasion of the sophist's visit to Rome in 144. It is a treasury of literary reminiscences and commonplaces, but it is not a reliable

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description of the Roman Empire at the time. Rostovtzeff, however, needed this rosy picture of the Antonine empire for his overall conception, and at the beginning of chapter five he suppressed his best instincts in a self-conscious defense of his use of the speech, calling it "an expression of sincere admiration for the greatness of the Roman Empire" and "a masterpiece of thoughtful and sound political analysis." Rostovtzeff's assessment of the Roman Oration had an unfortunate vogue. Sherwin-White, for example, in *The Roman Citizenship* (1939) wrote without a word of reservation, "Aristides gives the classical exposition of the theory of the Empire at the highest period of its development." And this was the only one of Aristides' numerous speeches to be translated repeatedly into English.

Less can be said of the oration to an unnamed emperor. It is a slender reed, and it is ascribed in the manuscripts to the same Aristides. A year ago C. P. Jones propounded powerful arguments for restoring the speech to Aristides;[8] if he is right it has no place in the third century at all. Rostovtzeff's occasional dependence on a single literary text is an odd feature in a book by one who knew well the rich material of papyri, inscriptions, coins, and monuments. Once again he shows himself to be the victim of his own theory.

Nevertheless, Rostovtzeff's obsession with the second and third centuries A.D. had a most important positive aspect. That is simply the fact that he drew attention to a period which was much neglected. Those of us who are now working actively in the history of those centuries are, in a sense, all heirs of Rostovtzeff. He was right to think that study of that time was needed, but wrong to imagine that therein lay the cause of Rome's decline. Current opinion, which finds the salvation rather than the destruction of the Roman Empire in the third century, also tends to consider the later Empire not so much an end as a beginning—the beginning of the Byzantine world.[9] Rostovtzeff might have been surprised by this tendency among contemporary historians but, as one of the first classical scholars to break down the walls of traditional parochialism, he would certainly have understood.

Furthermore, it was not only in his concentration upon the middle and later Empire that Rostovtzeff anticipated subsequent research, but also in his emphasis upon the role, however misinterpreted, of the municipal leaders in the provinces. These were the wealthy natives upon whom Rome often relied for the efficient administration and funding of provincial affairs. They may be called the local aristocracies. Rostovtzeff's assessment of these people was at once pioneering and correct:

> It is amazing to see what enormous sums were given by wealthy citizens, especially in the Greek East. We know of hundreds of such donors all over Greece and Asia Minor, and we must suppose that there was an exceedingly large number of opulent men who were moved by public opinion and by their own patriotism to spend freely on their native cities. . . . And it is worthy of note that the leaders of this movement were the best-educated men, the intellectuals of the time.

Rostovtzeff's observations pointed to unexplored areas in the social history of the Roman Empire.

After showing the way, Rostovtzeff himself did not undertake a systematic analysis of the municipal aristocracies, although such an analysis soon became a

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possibility as a result of other advances in ancient history during Rostovtzeff's lifetime. The scope of his research and writing, wide as it was, had been well defined by the time he left Russia; after that, although his judgment continued to mature, he did not branch into new fields. Hugh Last rebuked him for his inadequate knowledge of Roman Law, which Last believed to be the "fullest and most detailed expression of 'the Roman mind.' "[10] Law, it is true, had not been one of the fields which Rostovtzeff controlled, and he never bothered to remedy this. Likewise, when the techniques of prosopography impinged more and more on Roman history Rostovtzeff ignored them. Yet, properly applied, they supplied the basis for an understanding of the provincial citizens on whom Rostovtzeff laid such stress.

Prosopography was not new in the writing of Roman history when Sir Ronald Syme used it brilliantly in *The Roman Revolution*, written in the shadow of Hitler's rise to power and published in 1939. Matthias Gelzer had developed prosopographical methods to examine the Roman nobility as early as 1912 and Friedrich Münzer published his prosopographical classic, *Römische Adelsparteien und Adelsfamilien*, in 1920. It was to scholars such as these that Syme was indebted for his training in the discipline.[11] There was accordingly no reason why Rostovtzeff should not have taken account of prosopography; it was fully established in classical studies during the most creative period of his scholarly work. At its best, prosopography is nothing more nor less than a form of social history. Rostovtzeff never added it to his repertory of erudition.

Other major developments in ancient social and economic history since Rostovtzeff's death in 1952 tend to make Rostovtzeff's approach to his subject look increasingly dated and amateurish. He was a humanist, not a social scientist. He depended less on statistics than on imaginative extrapolation from the evidence with which he happened to be acquainted. The modern approach to Rostovtzeff's subject can be observed in the work of two young English scholars of distinction. One is Keith Hopkins who brings to a traditional classical education a professional training in sociology. His demographic studies have still not had the impact they deserve in classical circles because they have appeared in sociological rather than classical journals.[12] The other is Richard Duncan-Jones whose articles on the economic history of North Africa and Italy have set a high standard of statistical thoroughness.[13] The contributions of Hopkins and Duncan-Jones are far removed from the selective documentation given by Rostovtzeff.

Perhaps the most sobering result of recent research in the social and economic history of the ancient world is the realization that an overarching survey, as Rostovtzeff conceived it, is impossible. One can work fruitfully on particular topics within the field where the evidence is sufficiently abundant to be meaningful, but the patterns Rostovtzeff sought to find still elude us. The reader may smile at the supreme confidence of a scholar who can say in his footnotes such things as "Walton's results are substantially the same as mine," or "I am glad to see that the point of view which I was the first to emphasize . . . seems to be nowadays generally accepted." In many ways Rostovtzeff's huge canvas and authoritarian manner make

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him the last of the nineteenth-century ancient historians. He wrote very big books on very big themes. To most of us they have been, at one time or another, an inspiration. *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* galvanized a complacent generation of ancient historians. It advanced the subject by its blend of daring and broad erudition, and even now it retains its power to instruct and to provoke.

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4. H. M. Last, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 43 (1953), 133.
5. H. M. Last, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 16 (1926), 121.
6. Cf. Meyer Reinhold's stimulating article, "Historian of the Classic World: A Critique of Rostovtzeff," *Science and Society* 10 (Fall 1946), 361 ff.
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8. C. P. Jones, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 62 (1972), 134 ff.
9. Cf. Peter Brown's admirable book, *The World of Late Antiquity A.D. 150-750* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971).
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11. The fashionable tendency to associate Syme's work with that of Sir Lewis Namier is misleading. Syme read Namier's *Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (1929) after *The Roman Revolution* was completed.
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Mohammed and Charlemagne by Henri Pirenne

HENRI PIRENNE'S *Mahomet et Charlemagne* appeared posthumously in 1937. Pirenne had formulated its central thesis as early as 1916 and put it forward from 1922 onwards with a rigor of proof to which the book itself adds little other than a wealth of supporting evidence. *Mahomet et Charlemagne*, therefore, was hailed less as a novelty than as the "historical testament" of the foremost interpreter of the social and economic development of medieval Europe. To reconsider it as a "historical testament" may help the future reader and the past connoisseur of this succinct and brilliant monograph to seize through its pages the outline of modern attitudes toward the history of the end of the ancient world and the beginning of the Middle Ages.

It is important to treat *Mahomet et Charlemagne* as a historical testament. From the outset, it was vigorously contested by Pirenne's intellectual next of kin, and, as a result, the argument of *Mahomet et Charlemagne* has entered circulation in the academic world as "The Pirenne Thesis." Debates for and against this thesis have provided historians of the Later Roman Empire, Byzantium, early medieval Islam, and Western Europe, not to mention numismatists, with material for a respectable academic light industry, one whose products have, on the whole, proved ingenious and serviceable. That the terms of reference in the debate should stretch from the ceramic industry of third-century-A.D. Gaul to the relations between Scandinavia and Central Asia in the tenth century is no small tribute to the issues compressed into 285 pages in the English translation.

As with many a "classic," it is even possible for the specialist today to do without *Mahomet et Charlemagne*. Histories of the social and economic development of Western Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire can be written both with a greater range of detail and with a more sober sense of the human possibilities of an un-

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derdeveloped economy than was shown by Pirenne in his *Mahomet et Charlemagne;* they need contain only a passing reference to the dazzling paradoxes of Pirenne's exposition. Happy tillers of the ever-richer delta of Late Antique and early medieval studies can now get on with the job, giving little thought to the headwaters of that Nile which once swept so great a mass of alluvium down to their respective fields.

The "Pirenne Thesis" can be succinctly summarized:

For centuries after the political collapse of the Roman Empire in the West, the economic and social life of Western Europe still moved exclusively to the rhythms of the ancient world. *Romania,* a robust "functional Romanity" (whose resources were too easily overlooked by strict classical scholars), survived intact from the so-called "Germanic Invasions" of the fifth century A.D. Shabby but irreplaceable, much as the slipshod cursive script of a Merovingian document is an unmistakeable descendant of the ancient Roman hand, worn down by uninterrupted use, the civilization of *Romania* long outlived the Roman Empire. It survived because the economic life based on the Mediterranean had continued unscathed. It was only with the Arab conquests of the eastern and southern Mediterranean in the seventh century A.D. that this Mediterranean-wide economy was disrupted. Islam marks a breach in the continuum of ancient civilization incomparably deeper than that of the Germanic Invasions. For the first time, half of the known world took on an alien face. The Arab war fleets of the late seventh century closed the Mediterranean to shipping; the fall of Carthage in 698 sealed the fate of Marseille and with it the fate of *Romania* in Gaul. Deprived of its Mediterranean-wide horizons, the civilization of Western Europe closed in on itself, and the under-Romanized world of Northern Gaul and Germany suddenly gained a prominence inconceivable in earlier generations. The southern-oriented *Romania* was replaced by a Western Europe dominated by a Northern Frankish aristocracy. It was a society where wealth was restricted to land; its ruler, lacking the gold currency that taxation could have drawn from the economy had trade remained vigorous, was forced to reward his followers by grants of land, and feudalism was born. Its church no longer included a laity bathed in the living slipshod Latinity of the South, but was dominated by a clerical elite whose very handwriting "ploughed" into parchment made from the hides of their Northern flocks, whereas that of earlier clerics and laymen had slipped easily over sheets of Egyptian papyrus shipped direct from pre-Islamic Alexandria to the quays of Marseille. Clothes and diet lost all hint of the "Roman" elegance which had been based on continued commerce in the spices and silk products of the eastern Mediterranean. In short, the Empire of Charlemagne, a Northern Germanic Empire unimaginable in any previous century, marks the true beginning of the Middle Ages; all that had preceded it was the autumn of the ancient Mediterranean culture. The change happened, Pirenne insisted, not through any slow entropy of *Romania* in the South, nor through any discrete rise in the economic and human potential of the Germanic North. Rather, by breaking the unity of the Mediterranean, the Arab war

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fleets had twisted a tourniquet around the artery by which the warm blood of ancient civilization, in its last Romano-Byzantine form, had continued to pulse into Western Europe. "It is therefore strictly correct to say that without Mohammed, Charlemagne would have been inconceivable."[1]

So much for the "Pirenne Thesis." Modern readers who are grappling with the implications of our own shift from an "Atlantic" to a "Pacific" civilization, will find the verve and deep historical empathy with which Pirenne entered into a world whose people considered any alternative to the Mediterranean basin unthinkable particularly thrilling. *Mahomet et Charlemagne* is history written in terms of human horizons that suddenly close and tumble upside-down.

This thrill alone has carried historians of all periods through this book. Yet the historian of the end of the ancient world may well look beyond *Mahomet et Charlemagne* for a moment. The "Pirenne Thesis" is a spark, brilliant but frail, between solid electrical points, patiently constructed and maneuvered into position by Pirenne and the scholars of his generation. We can see their outline clearly in the light of the spark they generate. In order to read *Mahomet et Charlemagne* with an eye for present and future development in early medieval studies, it is as well to inquire how these electrical points came to be set up as they were, whether they can now stand where they did, and what new leap of current might yet pass between them.

The first and most lasting impression of Henri Pirenne's work as a whole is the one to which the readers of *Mahomet et Charlemagne* constantly return. Pirenne was the master of his age in expounding the social and economic basis of medieval civilization. It is as a series of chapters in the history of Western civilization and its transformations that *Mahomet et Charlemagne* remains an irreplaceable book.

Discussion of the separate facets of the "Pirenne Thesis" can divert attention from the stature of the book, much as a charged cloud disintegrates into a discharge of discrete hailstones. Nevertheless, let us examine in passing some of the facets of Pirenne with which it is now possible to disagree. First, economically, the commercial role of the Mediterranean in the fifth and sixth centuries was not such as to support the continuity of ancient civilization that Pirenne posited; determined, as we shall see, to cut the Germanic invasions of the fifth century down to size, Pirenne, as scholars of the Late Roman Empire were quick to point out, underrated the slow dislocation of Western Roman society from the third century A.D. onwards. One might add that the hushed generations following the great visitation of the plague after 543, which saw the saddened old age of Justinian, the maturity of Pope Gregory I, and the youth of Mohammed, might repay more close consideration as a possible turning point in the history of the Mediterranean.

Second, to have introduced Islam into a debate previously restricted to Western Europe was a master stroke of integration, the brightest "leap" of current of all between two hitherto separate poles. The pages in which Pirenne describes the ease with which the Muslim conquerors changed the civilization of populations that had

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remained untouched by the Germanic settlers are the most profound in the book. Yet early Islam trembled on the brink of becoming (like its nominal ancestors—Judaism and Christianity) a Mediterranean civilization. Shimmering on the surface of medieval Islamic civilization, like the path of a moonbeam over water, are reminders of *Romania*—in Islam's spread of Mediterranean legends as far as Indonesia, in its revival of Greek philosophy, in its preservation of gestures of ancient Mediterranean Christian worship so long forgotten in Western Europe that today they stand for all that is alien and "oriental" in modern Islam. Ummayad palaces on the fringe of Syria are as tantalizing as works of Gandhara art: their stance between East and West is still undecided.

Indeed, the battle for control of the Mediterranean was fought within Islam itself, between Syria and Iraq—between old Roman Damascus and new Baghdad, heir to the majesty of the Sassanian Empire. It was the last round of a battle that had been fought from the days of the Achaemenids to determine whether the Mediterranean would sink to the status of a distant fringe area of a Eurasian empire. The constant military and diplomatic initiative enjoyed by the Persian court of Ctesiphon over the Emperors of Constantinople in the sixth century contained the ingredients of the final victory of Baghdad. An Arabic teller of Persian fairy-tales (distant harbinger of *The Thousand and One Nights*) already threatened to draw away Mohammed's audience in the marketplace of Mecca. Even Sinbad the Sailor had already made his *début*. The recently published discoveries of the British Institute at Teheran in their archaeological expedition to Siraf on the Persian Gulf give an impression of a Sassanian maritime trade that must have formed the basis for the Arab commercial empire in the Indian Ocean. These are clear rumblings of the vast subsidence that shifted the center of gravity of Near Eastern civilization away from the Mediterranean. Around the shores of the Mediterranean, the true battle for the survival of *Romania* was waged not for control of the salty sea itself, but by sturdy farmers—in the Upper Nile, in Nubia, and in the great olive plantations of North Africa—for control of the irrigation that held their precious rainwater against the blind pressure of the nomads. Polish and British archaeologists have discovered, at Faras and at Kasr-Ibrahim in the Assuan province of Egypt, a little *Romania,* an amazing miniature Byzantium that held onto its water and so to its sixth-century Christian culture up to the age of Joan of Arc.

Standing between the modern student and unqualified acceptance of the main line of the argument of *Mahomet et Charlemagne* are the facts that *Romania* was dilapidated by fissures more ancient and more paradoxical than those stressed by Pirenne, and that Islam's deeper rhythms, in relation to *Romania,* coincide at few points with the tempting juxtapositions to which Pirenne first drew attention. To these I must add that among Western medievalists, there has been a revived appreciation of the Northern world slowly and obscurely taking shape in this period, often along sea routes that had changed little since the age of the Megaliths, and a steady depreciation and redefinition, particularly among economic historians, of the significance of the movement of luxury goods and bullion as factors in the style of Mediterranean civilization: to both these points I shall return.

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Pirenne, however, chose his evidence as he did because what interested him was civilization and its material basis. Differing ways of life and their material foundations drew his unfailing attention. How the style of one civilization differed from that of another—this Pirenne would seize upon and lay bare with unfailing clarity and zest in terms of a landscape, of an economic situation, or of a form of social organization. His *Histoire de Belgique* is *Mohamet et Charlemagne* without the cramping necessity for a single explanation; here he deals not with two successive and contrasting styles of civilization, but with a spectrum of contrasting ways of life, contemporary in time and contiguous in space, each firmly set by Pirenne in its own economic and social context, each explored as a bundle of distinctive human possibilities. In a masterly survey of the fourteenth-century Netherlands, for instance, Pirenne describes how Flanders slowly took on its non-French, Flemish face as the sea routes from the Atlantic ousted the land routes across the Kingdom of France; it was a Flemish face, also, because the local producers at Bruges and Ghent no longer depended on the merchants who had previously controlled the distribution of cloth along the roads into the French-speaking south. In a few, lucid pages he analyzes a revolution in social structure and cultural horizons of momentous importance for the history of modern Belgium.

In the 1920's and 1930's this particular manner of grasping the folds in the landscape of medieval Europe called for deep serenity of vision. Pirenne came from a family of Wallon industrialists, yet he was professor at the predominantly Flemish-speaking University of Ghent. What mattered for him was the shifting pageant of varying social structures, not the Romantic shibboleths of race and language. There is real personal warmth in his appreciation of Jean Froissart—chronicler, man of the world, true cosmopolitan, a fitting symbol of the human diversity and tolerance that Pirenne admired in the fourteenth-century Netherlands. Race and language, for Pirenne, were infinitely plastic. His heavy emphasis on the continuity of *Romania* as a social and economic unity based on the Mediterranean was forced into prominence by his steadfast refusal, as a cultivated European of the 1920's, to admit that, by virtue of their race alone, the Germanic invaders could have offered any alternative to it. It took more than a Romantic emphasis on the supposedly distinctive nature of Germanic political and legal institutions to convince this Belgian that the Germanic invaders had anything to offer to a civilization based on such tangible and massive realities as a network of ancient towns, a disciplined tax-system, and a living commerce.

Early in his career, Pirenne opted for Paris against Germany. He opted for the conviction of Fustel de Coulanges, that the documents of the early Middle Ages, if left to speak for themselves in their rough Latin, would, to the unprejudiced reader, speak of a Late-Roman social scene prolonged untidily into the Merovingian period, and not of any new Germanic principles of social organization. Pirenne first conceived the main theme of *Mahomet et Charlemagne* in an internment camp in Germany after 1914, to which he had been sent for refusing to collaborate with the German attempt to re-open the University of Ghent as a "nationalist," Flemish university. This goes some way to explain why he upheld its paradoxes with such sharpness: for Pirenne,

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the traditional equation of a Western European of the early twentieth century in explaining his own past had had one crucial element removed—the Germanic invaders were not a significant factor in the history of the early medieval period. If he could turn neither to Alaric nor to Clovis to account for the developments that led to the empire of Charlemagne, why not to the only genuinely creative non-Roman left on the horizon—Mohammed?

Rereading Pirenne's canny narrative about the early settlements of Germans around the Mediterranean makes one appreciate the vital contribution made by Marxist and Marxist-influenced historiography to the history of the barbarian invasions. Here, as in Pirenne, is history "demythologized," rendered antiseptic to the myth of race by stern attention to the grey, common humanity which, in Late Roman conditions, rapidly turned German warlords into great landowners and starving pillagers into serfs. Whether the organizing principle at issue is the *Romania* of Pirenne or the class struggle of Marx, the history of the barbarian invasions has been made more intelligible through the choice of a principle different from those which guided generations of "Romanist" and "Germanist" studies.

One can appreciate how *Mahomet et Charlemagne* is the sort of classic that can render itself unnecessary. In one firm stroke, Pirenne released the study of Late Antiquity from the *impasse* created by the rival claims of "Romanist" and "Germanist" legal historians. Naturally, scholarship has raced ahead, without bothering to look back. The debate over the "Pirenne Thesis" quickly moved to areas where Pirenne's knowledge lagged behind his intuitions: in fact, the most stimulating contributions have been made by Byzantinists and Islamic scholars.

This is easy to understand. Pirenne's book, the work of a master of Northern European history, was also the historical testament of a generation of Byzantine studies. The discovery of the social and economic achievement of Byzantium was the most exciting feature of early medieval studies in Pirenne's generation. To the historian of the transition from the ancient to the medieval idea of the state, the Byzantine Empire was a surviving example of the ancient bureaucratic polity: a state supported by a high rate of taxation, soundly based on mercantile cities and a prosperous peasantry, able to maintain a professional army, a salaried bureaucracy and a prestigious gold currency. By this high yardstick of achievement, the "feudal" society of the medieval West was measured and found wanting. Pirenne's fertile intuition—an intuition not shared by every scholar of the Later Roman Empire, many of whom still stress the long-standing social and cultural differences between eastern and western Mediterranean society in Late Roman times—was to apply this idea of Byzantium to Western Europe before the Islamic conquests. *Romania:* for Pirenne this word (revealingly, a word coined in the eastern Mediterranean where it remained current up to Ottoman times) seemed to sum up exhaustively the shabby, but solid, social and cultural furniture of Merovingian Gaul. He saw Western Europe as a substandard Byzantium: "Until the 8th century, the only positive element in history was the influence of the Empire."

This was, perhaps, too narrow a definition of Mediterranean civilization in the Late Antique period. The traveler who drives along the coastline of the Mediterra-

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nean, always aware of the grey band of mountains to the North, massive forerunners of the Alps, that dwarf the plains covered with vineyards and the porphyry escarpments heavy with the scent of cistus, might be reminded that, in a similar way, alternative styles of life to the clearly defined *Romania* of Pirenne had existed as palpable presences for Mediterranean men many centuries before Charlemagne. A history of Western European civilization in the early Middle Ages is today better able to find room for an element trenchantly excluded by Pirenne: the distinctive style of the civilization of the North. The recent achievements in Irish and Anglo-Saxon studies have revealed an insular world in the late sixth and seventh centuries of vast creativity, only partly dependent on *Romania.* The work of social anthropologists (more fruitfully allied with Dark-Age studies than with any other period of history except that of Ancient Greece) has induced a sober respect for the skill with which preliterate and technologically primitive societies have been observed to create a resilient "technology of human relations." A connoisseur of the intricate codes of behavior revealed in *Beowulf* and confirmed in the life of African tribes might still find the Merovingian court, as Pirenne found it, "a brothel," but its violences were governed by the law of the blood feud—and this was not the "law of the jungle." The claims of a new generation of historians working on the culture and social mores of Dark-Age Northern Europe are more solid than earlier claims based on a Romantic—and later brutally racist—idealization of the "Germanic" contribution to early medieval Europe, against which Pirenne so rightly set his face in the 1920's and 1930's. These new studies reveal values and social habits which were resilient and apposite, even in *Romania;* their rise to prominence in the civilization of the age of Charlemagne need not be regarded as due to the closing down of some infinitely richer alternative.

Pirenne's approach is most revealing where he touches most closely on cultural history. The evidence of the conscious values of groups supports his perspective better than does the fragmentary and ambiguous evidence for their economic activities. Surprisingly enough, it is the historian of the Christian Church, and not the economic historian, who finds Pirenne's vision of the early medieval period most helpful. The Christian religion identified itself almost from its origin with the urban civilization of the Mediterranean; it penetrated into the sprawling countryside of Western Europe along trade routes that linked it with the "boom" towns of Asia Minor; and it fed its imagination on Palestine and Syria and found that its intellectual powerhouse, in the Latin world, was North Africa. Indeed, the history of the Christian Church in the early Middle Ages is the history of *Romania à la Pirenne.* A student of religious sentiment and its visual expression in the eastern Mediterranean, who sets out to trace the evolution of the Byzantine iconostasis only to find the missing link in the surviving evidence in a description of a church in seventh-century County Kildare, returns to his task with a sober respect for the taproots that the culture of the Christian Church sank into the ancient soil of *Romania.*

The scholar who scrutinizes the evidence for commercial contact between Gaul and the eastern Mediterranean in the sixth century must surely come away with the odd feeling that somehow the glass that he holds in his hand for this meticulous task

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tells him far more about the quality of Mediterranean civilization than do the fragments caught in its focus. The whole text he has read has something to say to him. Rather than turn over yet again references to Syrian merchants and Egyptian papyrus in the *History of the Franks* by Gregory of Tours, it might be more rewarding to attempt to delineate the mental horizons of Gregory himself—a delicate, but better-documented task, promising more sure conclusions. What did *Romania* really mean to Gregory? How deeply were the ancient ways still sunk into his mind and categories of behavior? Did his expectations of a miracle, his characterization of a holy man, his instinctive reactions to the ways of God with men still move to the same rhythms as Syria and Cappadocia? This enterprise, an examination of the respective ease or difficulty with which Mediterranean men and their neighbors throughout *Romania* could lift the heavy legacy of the ancient world from their minds, might illuminate some of the greatest unsolved problems of medieval history.

However, it would not, I suspect, have satisfied Pirenne to rest his thesis on the atavisms of Christian bishops. He wanted more from a civilization: he wanted towns and merchants. This accounts, perhaps, for the most hotly contested element in the "Pirenne Thesis": Pirenne's insistence that the long-distance trade conducted by Syrian merchants was the distinguishing characteristic—indeed the *sine qua non*—of the *Romania* of the pre-Islamic era.

Here again we touch on the outstanding quality of Pirenne's life work: his understanding of the medieval city. The full meaning of the age of Charlemagne, as presented in *Mahomet et Charlemagne*, is not only that it marks the end of the ancient world, but that it serves as the backdrop to *Medieval Cities*. Pirenne's brilliant sketch, *Medieval Cities*, begins with a world that had recently, in the Carolingian Age, lost its cities and their merchants. Nobody knew better than Pirenne how different the ancient city was from the medieval city—the creation of merchants alone. Yet one cannot resist the impression that Pirenne, looking back, past the band of shadow that fell over urban life in the age of Charlemagne, into the *Romania* of Merovingian times, saw the same shade of light on both sides of the darkness. In *Medieval Cities*, Pirenne describes the revival of trade in tenth-century Europe as sweeping "like a beneficent epidemic" from Venice. Venice, to Pirenne, was a survival of the old, mercantile style of the Roman Mediterranean, a tenacious colony of "honorary Syrians" perched on the edge of the landlocked Carolingian West.

In *Mahomet et Charlemagne* the merchant is as much a symptom as the cause of a style of civilization of which Pirenne evidently approved: "the South had been the bustling and progressive region." In fact, however, when disentangled from the skein of related phenomena that made up Pirenne's *Romania*, the Syrian merchant cuts a poor figure. In the Later Empire, he was a stopgap who replaced the more solid commercial ventures of the classical Roman period. In Italy, it has been shown, the merchants spent their money on land and vanished, like water into sand; no Mediterranean-wide horizons for the soapmaker whose fortunes were safely invested in estates near Ravenna. The discreet ministrations of merchants of luxury goods survived the Arab invasions precisely because they had always been sporadic and marginal. One might look for the genuine article far into the East—in the villages of

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Mesopotamia and the Sassanian capital at Ctesiphon (whither the brother of one family of Syrian merchants vanished for a profitable twenty years in the sixth century), in the Isle of Kharg in the Persian Gulf, in the camp of nomad chieftains on the ends of the silk ways of Central Asia, in the wake of Persian *condottieri* on the Western frontiers of China where Christianity was described (in newly discovered Chinese Christian documents of the late seventh century) as "the religion of Antioch." There we could find a merchant and his distinctive culture after the heart of Pirenne, but it would be the culture of the caravan routes of Asia, not of the Mediterranean.

It was as a symbol of a style of life that Pirenne stuck to the role of the Syrian merchant in creating the Romania of post-Roman Western Europe. For Pirenne had that capacity of the greatest historians of civilization, and especially of historians who attempt to deal with the problem of changing styles of civilization: a warm blush of romantic fervor that led him to identify himself wholeheartedly with one style of life, and so to follow its development and modification with a passionate interest heavy with love and concern. Pirenne for the Middle Ages; Rostovtseff for the ancient world: each in his way was a great European *bourgeois*, studying with deep commitment the fate of civilizations based on cities.

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WILLIAM J. BOUWSMA

The Waning of the Middle Ages by Johan Huizinga

WE HAVE COME a long way since Bury informed us so firmly that history is a science, no more and no less. Historiography has now become so various and eclectic that it is often difficult to see it as the expression of any specific discipline; historians today seem to be united only by some common concern with the past and by a common allegiance, at least in principle, to respect for evidence, the exercise of critical intelligence, and openness of mind. They differ, on the whole amicably, about the questions they ask; and in answering these questions they draw freely on all the resources of their own intellectual and artistic culture. Their work often reveals highly personal qualities, sometimes latent, sometimes explicit and without apology; and although historical criticism can still find nothing better to say about much undistinguished work than that it is "definitive," it is likely to praise significant historical writing for its "imaginative power," its "vision," or its "originality." Johan Huizinga was a herald of this great change, and his *Waning of the Middle Ages* was one of the earliest and most influential models of the new history of the twentieth century.[1]

He had, of course, distinguished predecessors. But Jacob Burckhardt, to whom Huizinga was closer than has sometimes been recognized, had little general influence on the way history was written, however important he may have been for shaping the idea of the Renaissance; and Wilhelm Dilthey left no major work to illustrate his views, but only scattered essays and theoretical pronouncements not widely read by working historians. The historical profession continued on the whole, therefore, to follow what it thought of as scientific method, regarding its evidence as so much objective data to be accumulated bit by bit and then used like bricks for the construction of an edifice that was presumed to represent the past *wie es eigentlich gewesen*. Because politics had been more fully recorded than anything else, the core

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of most historical composition was political narrative; and although other aspects of human experience in the past were not altogether ignored, they tended in the typical history to be held aside for discussion at the end in chapters that seemed more like appendices than like an integral part of the historian's conception. Man, in this historiography, seemed little more than *Homo politicus*. By precept, but above all by example, Huizinga taught us how to write history differently.

He could do so partly because he was not a historians' historian but always, to his profession, something of an outsider. Largely self-trained, he observed his fellow historians—their methods, their questions, and their assumptions—with remarkable detachment and a refined irony that, it must be admitted, sometimes seemed calculated rather to annoy than to persuade. There was, perhaps, a good deal of *Homo ludens* in Huizinga himself; and one suspects that he enjoyed teasing his professional colleagues by deliberately ignoring, in his own work, some of their favorite concerns, or by pointing out how little their solemn categories had to do with any objective historical reality. His manner, indeed, made him appear in some respects more iconoclastic than he was. Nevertheless, his rebellion against the tendencies dominant in the historical establishment of his time was fundamental; he rejected its scientific pretensions, its belief—attached to conceptions of geological and biological evolution—in progress, and its naive confidence that the facts speak for themselves.

The narrowing of the historian's audience, for which he partly blamed these tendencies, also troubled him. In "The Task of Cultural History," a lecture delivered in 1926, seven years after the appearance of *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, Huizinga exposed the concerns underlying that work. He proclaimed that history should serve as "the implement with which culture accounts for its past," and he argued that it must therefore "find its sphere and its sounding board in life in general in its own day" and be read as widely as possible. Few among the great historians since the Renaissance, he pointed out with perhaps a hint of malice, had been university men; and the growing confinement of history within universities seemed to him symptomatic of an increasingly unhealthy relation between scholarship and the general culture of educated men.[2] From this standpoint *The Waning of the Middle Ages* presents itself as a conscious effort to restore the health of the profession to which Huizinga belonged by striking out in a new direction. He was seeking, in that book, to reclaim history for the culture of his own time, and to do so in part by redefining the relationship of the historian to his subject along what might crudely be described as humanistic rather than scientific lines, in part by incorporating into historical thought new kinds of evidence and new conceptions drawn from other human (rather than scientific) disciplines: literature and aesthetics but also social studies in which, like few other historians of his generation, he was widely read.

The importance of *The Waning of the Middle Ages* does not, in fact, lie in its general thesis, which—a point not always realized—was a bit old-fashioned, even reactionary. Huizinga relied heavily on Burckhardt's *Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (I cite the German title because *Kultur* brings out, better than the English

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Civilization, the filiation between Burckhardt and Huizinga, the self-conscious historian of culture). Huizinga began with Burckhardt's view of cultural history as a study of the attitudes, values, and behavior patterns of men in groups in the past, a conception that largely ignored conventional political narrative. Such history turned out to have obvious affinities with sociology, anthropology, and psychology, and Huizinga, three-quarters of a century later, was in a better position to recognize this than Burckhardt.

Huizinga was also Burckhardtian in a more specific way. Far from attacking Burckhardt's conception of the Renaissance wholesale, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* accepted and reiterated its general validity. Burckhardt's work, after all, had been limited to Italy; and, by stressing the priority of Italy in the formation of modern culture, Burckhardt was also saying that the rest of Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had remained essentially medieval. Huizinga's book revealed how well the courtly culture of France and the Netherlands supported this view, and the central thesis of the book was its least original quality. Indeed, from time to time Huizinga paid explicit tribute to the Burckhardtian orthodoxies. He made much of Michelangelo's remarks about Flemish painting to show the contrast between Italy and the North, and he thought Burckhardt equally right about literature. "Thinking of the Italian literature of the same period, the fresh and lovely period of the *quattrocento,*" Huizinga wrote, "we may perhaps wonder how the form and spirit of the Renaissance can still seem so remote from the regions on this side of the Alps."[3] Huizinga's true target was not Burckhardt but those scholars, such as Konrad Burdach or the art historian Louis Courajod, who were attempting to annex parts of medieval culture to the Renaissance in a quite un-Burckhardtian spirit, to deny the uniqueness of Italy, and to claim the Renaissance as a European phenomenon.

Not that Huizinga was a slavish disciple. Like any able scholar working in the tradition of a respected master, he reviewed Burckhardt's insights critically, tested them with fresh evidence, and limited some of Burckhardt's claims; Burckhardt, after all, had invited such treatment by modestly calling his own great work "an essay." Huizinga had the advantage of knowing more about Northern Europe in the Middle Ages than Burckhardt, and he perceived that, in some matters of detail, Burckhardt had been mistaken about the peculiarities of the Italian Renaissance; medieval culture, too, had known Stoic concern with the inconstancy of Fortune and the natural equality of man, thirst for glory, and a bold naturalism, to cite a few examples.[4] Again, the popularity of Petrarch and Boccaccio in France led Huizinga to take a brief but closer look at these supposed founding fathers of the Renaissance, and he discovered in them more ambiguity, more that seemed medieval, than had commonly been discerned.[5] The result was a more nuanced but still fundamentally Burckhardtian perception of the Italian Renaissance that strikingly foreshadowed some of the most fruitful achievements of recent scholarship—for example, Hans Baron's treatment of the ambiguities of the fourteenth century or Charles Trinkaus's study of the moral and religious thought of the Italian humanists.[6]

But Huizinga also felt compelled to deal in a more basic way with the problem of innovation and tradition so central to Renaissance scholarship. Medievalists since

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Burckhardt had shown conclusively that a broad and respectful knowledge of the classics had been common during the Middle Ages, so that classicism in itself could no longer be taken as an essential criterion of Renaissance culture. Yet Huizinga was fully persuaded, following Burckhardt, that there was some crucial difference between medieval and modern culture, however inaccurately this had been defined. And in his effort to solve this problem we can begin to sense both his originality and something of the larger resonance of his work. His solution took the shape of a distinction between the forms of a culture and its content or spirit. The true significance of the Renaissance, he argued, did not lie in its use of classical forms, since these had been known before, but in the convergence of these forms with a new spirit.[7] He was traditional enough to identify this new spirit with an authentic classicism, but the principle has led to a new precision in the understanding of what was peculiar to the Renaissance. By reuniting a genuinely classical spirit to classical forms, Renaissance culture could perceive the great Greeks and Romans as inhabitants of a world very different from its own, remote in time as well as in quality.

Huizinga's distinction between form and spirit, however vague it may have seemed at the outset, thus opened the way to the emphasis of twentieth-century scholars on the peculiar historicism of the Renaissance, that sense of temporal perspective which made it possible for the first time for men to contrast themselves with other men in the past and to consider themselves modern. From this standpoint, the men of the Renaissance were indeed the first modern men, not quite for Burckhardt's reasons but because they were the first Europeans to consider themselves so. Huizinga did not explore all this himself, but the insight, with its recognition of the historical significance of subjectivity, was typical of his kind of cultural history. It also had other implications important for later historians of the Renaissance. For Renaissance historicism pointed to the relativity of all human culture, including historical and perhaps even scientific thought, to historical conditions. Huizinga's conception of his own historical activity was thus closely related to his understanding of what had occurred in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Europe.

Thus, even as he wrestled with the Renaissance problem, Huizinga was opening up, in *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, a new way of thinking about every part of the past; and here, of course, lies the larger importance of the book. It was reassuring to historians in its adherence to guild standards: it was based on objective data critically scrutinized. Nevertheless, it departed radically from prevailing assumptions about the relation between the historian and his materials. Huizinga was, in fact, proposing a far more dynamic, creative, and personally responsible conception of the historian's task than a "scientific" idea of history had permitted. He saw clearly that the ability of the historian to make sense of the past did not depend primarily on his adding to an already unmanageable body of data but on the questions he asked, and that these were products of the historian's personal insight and imagination. "Ten fools can answer more questions than one wise man can ask," he declared, inverting an old proverb.[8] Huizinga, by his own example, was exhorting the historian to make creative use of his unavoidable subjectivity and his dependence on the culture of his

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time. This, for him, was the only way to restore a healthy relation between history and culture.

More specifically, the general task of historical composition, as Huizinga saw it, was not to review and describe "all" the evidence (though this had to be meticulously evaluated) but to penetrate beneath it to its underlying principles; we can thus discern here a more general application of his distinction between the forms and the content of culture. But this task could not be accomplished mechanically, by following the rules of an objective methodology. It required the full engagement of the historian both as a percipient individual and as a sensitive representative of his own culture, able to ask the questions that mattered in his own time. This conviction was a fundamental addition to Burckhardt's idea of cultural history. "Only when the scholar turns to determining the patterns of life, art, and thought taken all together can there actually be a question of cultural history," he wrote. But "the nature of those patterns is not set. They obtain their form beneath our hands."[9] Following this principle the historian could present all that men had done in the period of his concern—the totality of human culture in a given place and time—in a way that was not only historically authentic but that also illuminated the broader possibilities of the human condition. For, in Huizinga's thought, man was always at the center of the historical stage; none of his activities could be hypostatized (the efforts of historians notwithstanding); all that man did was significant at least as a form of expressive behavior, telling us what, at some moment in the past, he was like at the center of his being.

The result was both a new concreteness and a new principle of synthesis, at once Burckhardtian and going beyond Burckhardt in its ability to give coherence to the historian's total enterprise. After Huizinga, for example, intellectual history, as the simple history of ideas, could no longer be fully satisfying; it had to be an integral part of life itself, pointing ultimately to deeper impulses flowing from social and political experience or from collective psychology.

His focus on the human being at the center of history allowed Huizinga to enlarge the scope of history in ways that remarkably anticipated many of the new directions history has taken in this century, for his conception of cultural history has tended to become the definition of what, for many of us, all history should now aspire to be, even when our particular studies seem far removed from his. Nor can we blame him for failing to pursue all the provocative suggestions offered, sometimes almost casually, in *The Waning of the Middle Ages*. Few of his successors have been able to follow more than one or two of them.

Much of the excitement of the book lay, therefore, in its demonstration of what could be done with kinds of evidence few previous historians had known how to exploit fruitfully. Huizinga was instructive not so much because he used artistic and literary materials as for what he made them reveal. The peculiar responses of the senses, not only of the eye and ear but also of touch, smell, and even taste became, under his guidance, historically significant. The passions as well, the manner in which they were regarded, the ways they found expression, became a part of culture. So did dreams, fantasies, delusions, fads, games, symbolic structures: these were no

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longer too frivolous to merit the attention of a serious historian, or errors happily transcended by a more enlightened age, but profoundly instructive reflections of the human condition. Apparently without the help of Freud, Huizinga was also aware of the erotic element in human culture, an insight that informed some of his most evocative chapters. And in spite of the elitism for which he has so often been condemned, Huizinga pointed too, in one of his pregnant asides, to the special importance for the historian of the humbler dimensions of life:

> The specific forms of the thought of an epoch should not only be studied as they reveal themselves in theological and philosophic speculations, or in the conceptions of creeds, but also as they appear in practical wisdom and everyday life. We may even say that the true character of the spirit of an age is better revealed in its mode of regarding and expressing trivial and commonplace things than in the high manifestations of philosophy and science.[10]

He was equally open to methodological innovation and in some cases he practiced it. He would, I think, have been deeply sympathetic to quantitative research; consider how useful he would have found the computer for solving the following problem, which he posed with a clarity not always characteristic of later quantifiers: "To determine the taste in colors characteristic of the epoch would require a comprehensive and statistical research, embracing the chromatic scale of painting as well as the colors of costume and decorative art."[11] Meanwhile the work of sociologists like Weber encouraged him into occasional ventures in cross-cultural comparison; thus he bolstered his remarks about the aristocratic ideal of manly perfection in Europe by noting similar conceptions in India and Japan.[12] And, more profoundly, his approach to the life of the past took the form of a kind of cultural functionalism. The structures of culture, in his view, were of interest to the historian because they met the most serious social needs. Much of the special quality of Huizinga's thought is conveyed in a characteristic effort to apply this principle:[13]

> The passionate and violent soul of the age, always vacillating between tearful piety and frigid cruelty, between respect and insolence, between despondency and wantonness, could not dispense with the severest rules and the strictest formalism. All emotions required a rigid system of conventional forms, for without them passion and ferocity would have made havoc of life. By this sublimating faculty each event became a spectacle for others; mirth and sorrow were artificially and theatrically made up. For want of the faculty to express emotions in a simple and natural way, recourse must needs be had to esthetic representations of sorrow and joy.

All this can be said of the greatness of Huizinga and the distinction of *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, and yet it is also a flawed book which even a historian sensitive to its virtues cannot find altogether satisfactory. For Huizinga was an outsider not only in respect to his own profession but also in relation to the culture of his own time, and he was therefore imperfectly fitted to mediate between the two. He was uncomfortable in an increasingly democratic world, and the development of mass culture left him with a sense of foreboding to which he gave formal expression with *In the Shadow of Tomorrow* (1935). The mood of that book was already present in *The Waning of the Middle Ages* and largely accounts for its defects as well as its peculiar point of view. Huizinga saw his own time as a period in which culture was also

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waning; and just as he was blind to much that others have seen as positive in the modern world, he ignored, though he was not altogether unaware of, the positive elements in the Northern European scene during the later Middle Ages.

Thus Huizinga's reaction against assumptions of progress made him reluctant to grapple with change, and his portrait of Northern Europe in the later Middle Ages is even more static than Burckhardt's of Italy. His resistance to the significance of change was reflected in a skepticism about historical periodization; and although this was wholesome in itself, it weakened his presentation of the peculiarities of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which he never clearly distinguished from what had gone before. This unsolved problem is reflected in the original Dutch title of his book, whose ambiguity is concealed by its English translation: *Waning* is too unequivocally negative for *Herfsttij*, which suggests not only autumnal decline but also the ripe fruits of the harvest.[14] Huizinga often seems unclear whether he is describing a "primitive" and "childlike"—these are among his favorite adjectives—or a decadent and sophsticated culture.

A related defect was his basic lack of concern with explanation. Again his impulse here was in part a healthy reaction against the facile treatment of causality by some of his contemporaries, especially Marxists, but he weakened a good point by stating it in a way that was not only playful but perhaps frivolous:[15]

> Knowing in the historical sense rarely if ever means indicating a strictly closed causality. It is always an understanding of contexts. . . . This context is always an open one, which is to say that it may never be represented in the metaphor of links forming a chain, but only in that of a loosely bound bundle of sticks to which new twigs can be added as long as the band around them allows it. Perhaps more suitable than a bundle of sticks might be a bunch of wildflowers. In their variety and their difference in value new notions added to the conception of a historical context are like newly found flowers in the nosegay: each one changes the appearance of the whole bouquet.

The conception may have fitted the historical "still-lifes" that came out of his own study, but it was hardly helpful in accounting for the "waning" of the Middle Ages; and he could not altogether avoid the problem of cause. Yet when he did deal with it, he took refuge in a kind of organic cultural determinism that seems more like evasion than explanation. The waning of medieval culture, he suggested, was a product of fatigue, the result of the long and strenuous elaboration of its potentialities: "What may be called a stagnation of thought prevails, as though the mind, exhausted after building up the spiritual fabric of the Middle Ages, had sunk into inertia."[16] But this was a betrayal of his own deepest insights. It implies that, in spite of his sociological interests, some part of his mind still clung to the notion of an autonomous culture developing, in the custody of a cultivated elite, according to its own internal dynamics.

Yet this also helps to explain why he refused to look seriously beyond aristocratic culture at the forces that were making the old nobility superfluous and at the energies already at work in the formation of a new culture—a serious limitation that also reflected his indifference to both change and cause. He did not choose to face the double significance of the notion of decadence at the heart of his book, the symbiosis

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of old and new, decay and growth. Every positive development he either minimized, like nominalism, or omitted, like the movements of religious renewal. He was not unaware of what was positive in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and the end of his book suggested what a more balanced depiction of the later Middle Ages would have included: "A high and strong culture is declining, but at the same time and in the same sphere new things are being born."[17] He was even inconsistent enough to admire the novelties of Italy. But the contrast between "a high and strong culture" and "new things" sticks in the mind. Huizinga did not much care for new things, and so he left them out of what he nevertheless often seems to want us to accept as the essential truth about the later Middle Ages.

Yet, in spite of its defects, in spite of the fact that so much in *The Waning of the Middle Ages* has now become the common possession of historians so that its work has in this respect largely been done, the book is still well worth reading. It can be enjoyed as a work of high art, full of color and life, as in its marvelous opening chapter with its bells and processions, its public executions and public tears. Or it can be read as documentation of an important transition in the cultural history of our own century, as illuminating for its ambivalence and confusion as for its movement from one stage to the next. But the work will continue to be read above all, I think, for another reason. Just as man, in all his multifaceted complexity, is for Huizinga at the center of history, so Huizinga the man, in all his brilliance and complexity, remains at the center of the history he wrote. Since Huizinga revealed so much of himself in his work and since he had a singularly original and stimulating mind, provocative even when it seems most limited and perverse, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* has the kind of vitality that causes historical writing to be read long after its own time.

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9. Ibid., p. 28.
10. Huizinga, *Waning*, p. 225.
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12. Ibid., p. 77.
13. Ibid., pp. 50-51.
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15. Huizinga, "Task," p. 39.
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CHARLES P. KINDLEBERGER

The Great Transformation by Karl Polanyi

SOME BOOKS refuse to go away. They get shot out of the water by critics but surface again and remain afloat. *The Great Transformation* by Karl Polanyi[1] doesn't exactly refuse to go away, but it was slow in arriving and it has kept on coming. Robert MacIver wrote a glowing preface for it when it was published in 1944, but few scholars took notice. Then it was discovered by economic historians. In the last decade, radical youth has adopted it as gospel, although Polanyi was not a radical. Polanyi's lasting quality derives less from his positive message than from his polemic against economic prescriptions as he emphasizes the tension between economic and social approaches to life.

The theme of *The Great Transformation* has been continuously on my mind. I referred to it first in a paper in 1951, most recently in 1970, and a least five times in between. My reference is usually a half-sentence summary: "Polanyi believed it outrageous that economic overwhelmed social considerations in the industrial revolution," plus, frequently, a half-sentence rebuttal: "but to prevent adaptation to market conditions may simply store up and aggravate the difficulties, as illustrated by the refusal of France to permit the modernization of agriculture from 1890 to 1950, leaving its peasants sodden, brutalized, inefficient, demoralized." I see the question as to whether economic and social forces converge or conflict as unresolved and well worth discussing.

I cannot recall who told me about Polanyi, but I remember well the circumstances. In 1949-1950, I gave a course on the Economy of Europe at Columbia University in New York on Wednesday mornings, coming down from M.I.T. in Cambridge each Tuesday on the Merchants Limited at 5 P.M. or the Owl at 11, and returning the next day on the Yankee Clipper at 1 or the Merchants Limited at 5. It was a year for reading by opportunity and necessity. The opportunity was created by

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the trains—unless, to my dismay, I ran into an acquaintance who wanted to talk. The necessity arose from the fact that the course required that, before I got to the post-World-War-II recovery which I knew well from having spent the years from 1945 to 1948 in the State Department, I had to deal with economic geography and history. I read assiduously, a week ahead of the students. Someone recommended Polanyi, which had appeared unnoticed during the war but was making its way. I read a library copy early in the term, and bought my own in December. It was an important step in my gradual conversion to economic history; it got me interested, in particular, in the responses of Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Denmark to the fall in the price of wheat after 1879. The reduction in land and ocean transport costs and the settling of the plains of North America, Argentina, Australia and the Ukraine had rendered wheat production in Europe uneconomic. How should these countries respond? How did they? And why? With Christian socialist fervor, Polanyi attacked the classical reaction which was to adapt to market conditions. The book is eminently readable today, a time when the clash between social and economic forces is present in import-competing industries, in the intrusive multinational corporation, in erosion, pollution, and depletion—all prophetically noted by Polanyi.

The theme of the book is that it was not industrialization as such which created the social disruption of the nineteenth century, but the notion developed by Ricardo, Marx and James Mill that markets should prevail. The author is not much concerned with goods markets; he sees as the fundamental error of that time the conviction that men, land and money were subject to markets. Indeed, the liberal creed, held with evangelical fervor, bordered on fanaticism in its insistence on free trade, a competitive labor market, and the gold standard. Polanyi is not above using rhetoric in his condemnation as he inveighs against the "inherent absurdity of the idea of the self-regulating market,"[2] "the weirdest of all undertakings of our ancestors" (to isolate land and make a market out of it),[3] and "the utopian nature of market economy."[4] For the most part, however, he develops his argument historically, placing particular emphasis on anthropological evidence that man is a social not an income-maximizing animal, and on his careful analysis of the Speenhamland system of 1795 which replaced the Act of Settlement of 1662, and was in turn superseded by the New Poor Law of 1834.

The fourth chapter and its appendix cite anthropologists to prove that there is no such animal as "economic man." I take delight in many of his quotations, especially those from Malinowski which, it seems to me, as brilliantly describe life in Lincoln, Massachusetts, as in the western Pacific—for example, "Perfection in gardening is *the general index to the social value of a person*,"[5] and "Much time and labor is given up to aesthetic purposes, to making gardens tidy . . . to providing specially strong and big yam-poles. All these things are, to some extent required for the growth of the plant; but there can be no doubt that the natives push their conscientiousness far beyond the limit of the purely necessary."[6] In dining out in Lincoln, I telescope these into: "A man's prestige is measured by the height of his bean poles"; at M.I.T. they become, "A graduate student's worth is measured by the height of his boxes of IBM cards."

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The myth of *Homo sapiens* as economic man, continuously maximizing wealth or income or some other economic variable like utility, subject to constraint, retains a strong hold on the economic profession, especially in such precincts as the University of Chicago. Many economists see procreation as a consumer decision in the acquisition of durable goods. They consider it wrong of government to license doctors, and would let the market for doctors' services decide who is entitled to practice and who not. And so on. But few take the notion of economic man literally either as description or as prescription. Frank Knight, an early Chicagoan, said that the one thing the economic man (maximizing) and the true Christian (loving his brother as himself) had in common was that neither had any friends. Economic man is a scientific hypothesis of the *als ob* (as if) sort: man acts, as a rule, as if he were maximizing some economic variable subject to constraint. Moreover, when markets are functioning well, they provide a system of decentralized decision-making, based on informational signals (pricing), a system which has the social advantage of depersonalizing the course of events (Smith's invisible hand).

In his historical interpretations, Polanyi poses three issues: First, was life in traditional society so satisfactory that its transformation was an act of criminal negligence? Second, with regard to timing, did the market in fact come to dominate at the same time that society began to suffer? Third, was the transformation actually brought about by the introduction of machinery and the factory, or by the organization of the economy into a pervasive system of markets?

Polanyi does not discuss life in patriarchal society very much, but by implication he suggests that it was agreeable. Other writers do much the same thing. The Hammonds, Harriet Martineau, Marx and Engels and many others spent their time painting the miseries of the lives of the poor under the factory system, thereby implying that the *status quo ante* was a happy one.

The question as to whether it was the market system or the factory which brought misery is closely related. Between the manor system with guilds and full industrialization was the transitional stage of the putting-out or cottage industry system, which depended on the market. In his *Condition of the Working Classes* in 1854, Friedrich Engels describes the idyllic life of the cottage worker and his family:

> The history of the proletariat in England begins with the invention of the steam engine and of machinery for working cotton . . . before then the workers vegetated throughout a passable comfortable existence, leading a righteous and peaceful life in all piety and probity; and their material condition was far better than that of their successors. They did not need to overwork; they did no more than they chose to do, and yet they earned what they needed. They had leisure for healthful work in garden or field, work which, in itself, was recreation for them, and they could take part beside in the recreation and games of their neighbors, and all these games—bowling, cricket, football, etc. contributed to their physical health and vigor. . . . Their children grew up in the fresh country air, and, if they could help their parents at work, it was only occasionally; while of eight or ten hours work for them there was no question. . . . The young people grew up in idyllic simplicity and intimacy with their playmates until they married. . . .[7]

In *The World We Have Lost*, Peter Laslett draws a contrast between traditional society with work and family life combined, and the industrial mode. He observes

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that industry did not bring oppression and exploitation. They were already there. If the family can be a circle of affection, it can also be a scene of hatred. "The worst tyrants among human beings are jealous husbands and resentful wives, possessive parents and deprived children."[8]

It is true, as Polanyi points out,[9] that the Industrial Revolution on the Continent was different from that in Britain, and Rudolf Braun, dealing with the Zurich Oberland, does not claim that the processes he describes are general. His research is nonetheless a significant counter to the generalizations made about the evils caused by the spread of the market and of the machine. Braun's studies showed that the poor gained from the economic changes. Population had grown to the point where all the people could no longer support themselves on the arable land or as woodsmen, and spinning and weaving on the putting-out system enabled families to stay together and to avoid being driven from the community in search of work.[10] The arrival of the factory, in turn, brought work to a homeless, floating fringe which had been unable to accommodate to the putting-out system.[11] In due course machine yarn drove the home spinners of all but the finest counts of cloth into factories where a new and different set of social institutions was developed. Braun quotes with approval in 1853 comment to the effect that many fall into the error of thinking the introduction of machinery caused the greatest evils. In fact, the comment, goes on, there were more and greater evils in the 1770's and 1780's, the time thought of as the golden period.[12] In the Zurich Oberland, at least, the putting-out system was an improvement over peasant overcrowding, and the factory, after a transitional period, was an improvement over putting-out.

My knowledge of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain is inadequate for me to draw a parallel with the Zurich Oberland, but there is surely a presumption that both the miseries of the 1830's and the idyllic quality of traditional society are exaggerated. Much of our information of the period, as conveyed by Harriet Martineau, the Hammonds, Engels, *et al,* derives from evidence given before Royal Commissions, starting with the one which preceded the passage of the New Poor Law of 1834. That this evidence was biased is hard to deny. As Friedrich Hayek notes, it was given by landlords smarting under their defeat at the hands of the industrialists in the Reform Bill of 1832. Polanyi argues that, while the inclination and interest of the Church and manor led them to support the factory acts against laissez faire, such support was in part a residue of their feudal leadership of total society. In any case, the emphasis on current distress left an implication of earlier serenity which is not valid. Gregory King in 1688 divided the population of England into two groups: 2,675,000 who increased the wealth of the Kingdom, and 2,825,000 who reduced it. The latter group, consisting of 1,275,000 laborers and outservants, 1,300,000 cottagers and paupers, and 30,000 vagrants, lived in continuous or at least intermittent poverty, as may some of the 660,000 freeholders of the lesser sort belonging to the first group. There were poor and poor laws well before the commercial revolution or the industrial revolution, and when there were crop failures, suffering was widespread. At all times life expectancies were short.

Polanyi's discussion of timing is also bound up with the question whether it was

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the market or the factory which produced distress. One focus of his attention is the Speenhamland system of 1795 which replaced the 1662 Poor Law. The 1662 law bound the poor and their relief to the parish. There were vagrants—30,000 in 1688 as noted above—but parish relief, by tying most people to their parishes, prevented the formation of a national market for labor, although the enclosures had already created a national market for land, and the establishment of the Bank of England in 1694 created a national market for money. The repeal of the 1662 law in 1795 would have created a national market for labor had not the justices of Berkshire, meeting at Speenhamland in May of that year, decided to provide an allowance from the poor rate as a subsidy to wages for poor and industrious persons whenever the price of bread rose above a shilling a gallon loaf. In effect, this was a subsidy which varied with wages, and again it was administered by the parishes. Intended to help the poor in periods of crop failure and distress, it had the disastrous effect of forcing down wages and destroying work incentives. Employers generally gained from the lower wages, even though they added to their taxes: the poor rates were also paid by some who did not have many persons working for them. Laborers, however, saw little point in working hard, since the more they earned the less relief they received. The Poor Law of 1834 which finally created a national market for labor eliminated the Speenhamland system which, however well intentioned, produced widespread misery.

It is never clear in Polanyi's discussion whether the social distress which he blames on the market occurred only in the 1830's, after the Poor Law was enacted. If it occurred earlier, it must have been due not to incorporating labor in a national market, but to using a market with a wrong (subsidized) price. The poor were not a problem for Adam Smith in 1776; they were for Townsend who wrote a "Dissertation on the Poor Laws" in 1786. The watershed occurred about 1780.[13] But the first national market for grain came into being in the middle of the eighteenth century, the national market for labor not until after 1830. It is hard to see how the national market for labor in the 1830's could have created the poor of 1780.

Nor, despite Adam Smith, was there any strong demand for "free trade" in the eighteenth century. The contemporaneous slogan, laissez faire, emanated from French Physiocrats, interested not in generally untrammeled markets, but in freeing grain for export. In 1791, penalties for exporting machinery from England were extended to the export of models of machines and specifications for building them as well. In 1800, Manchester weavers demanded a prohibition against the export of cotton yarns (shades of Burke-Hartke). Free trade, according to Polanyi, became a fanatic's creed, held with evangelical fervor, only in the 1830's.[14] This view underestimates the earlier power of mercantilism with its interest in building a national market, the Prussian elimination of internal duties and tolls in 1818, and the ideological following of Adam Smith in Britain and on the Continent.

If one grants that the poor were in unrelieved misery, accentuated by crop failures, during the Napoleonic Wars well before the Hungry Forties, the most interesting question is whether the main cause for this misery was the market or industrialization by means of machinery and factories. Polanyi is in no doubt on the

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issue: "*The congenital weakness of nineteenth century society was not that it was industrial but that it was a market society*"[15] (his italics, and the only complete sentence italicized in the entire book). In 1892, as I noted above, Engels put the blame on the "steam engine and machinery for working cotton." Later, however, in the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels state that the "bourgeoisie has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations" and that free trade "has resolved personal worth into exchange values." Peter Laslett insists that Marx is wrong to see the process simply as the triumph of capitalism—the rise and victory of the bourgeoisie. He maintains that our sense of having lost a world comes from the transformation of the family by industry,[16] and reminds us that the commercial revolution occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, while the factory arrived in the middle and late eighteenth century.[17]

Polanyi's excoriation of the market and his support for the machine stem from his Christian socialism. The hero of *The Great Transformation* is the atheist Robert Owen of New Lanark who recognized the neutral character of the machine, or perhaps the Quaker John Bellers who wanted to organize production efficiently but not for the market. Polanyi's dominant social goods are status, self-respect and standards. In a world of change, settled folk are converted by the market into shiftless migrants. People, in his view, are not exploited in the sense that they become less well off economically; rather they are damaged by the disintegration of their environment. In a parallel situation, imperialism, in India for instance, may have benefited the country economically, but socially it caused disorganization and rendered her prey to misery and degradation.[18]

There is much truth in Polanyi's view of the clash between economic and social goals. In a recent paper on the multinational enterprise, I suggested that, for many purposes, the optimal size of economic space is the world, whereas the optimum size of society is small enough to allow each person to have a sense of participation. In politics, the optimum size varies depending upon the goal: for a Bismarck or a DeGaulle seeking power, bigger is better; for a country desirous of getting along, the scale of Sweden or Switzerland is satisfactory, provided it is lucky enough not to be in the way of a power-seeker at the wrong time.

I consider it misguided to give primacy to any one viewpoint, be it that of economics, politics, or sociology. In Washington, I lived near the Episcopal Theological Seminary of Virginia, from which I hired high-class babysitters. I admitted to one of these that I was a student of economics, and he replied, "That's a branch of theology I have not studied." To Polanyi, sociology is the queen science, and tariffs, flexible exchange rates (the antithesis to the gold standard), and any and all other interferences in the market economy are justified by the need to preserve the pattern of society and the status of its members. He makes the good point that free trade has to be planned, whereas *ad hoc* restrictive measures, such as those passed in the 1870's and 1880's, come naturally. Free trade, he reminds us, is not natural, but comes into being only with the aid of protective tariffs and export boun-

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ties.[19] And he sees that a world of discovery and technological change contains a continuous threat to patterns of civilization.

But to follow the course Polanyi suggests is also dangerous to the pattern of civilization. To ignore technological change, to resist the spread of the market through the reduction of natural and artificial barriers to trade, and to seek to insulate society from the effects of change outside its confines is sure to fail. Postponement of all response while change accumulates abroad may make the ultimate adjustment more cataclysmic, as it did, for example, in French agriculture. Although the multinational corporation does bring a threat of cultural degeneration, to keep it out without making adjustments to the economic forces it represents is self-defeating.

Thus, economics and society are in a state of tension. In the short run, the pressure of economic change on society may have to be filtered or diluted to keep the speed of social change tolerable. In the long run, however, I suspect that society must adapt to economic variables. Where the ideology of economic liberalism prescribes measures which would overload a nation's capacity for social adaptation, there is excellent reason to modify its impact. The same kind of approach is called for to arbitrate between social and private values. I agree with Polanyi (contrary to the views of Henry George) that one wants to remove as much land from the market as is synonymous with its use for homes, cooperatives, factories, schools, parks, wild-life preserves, and so on.[20] But there must be some principles for deciding what to produce where, and who lives where; and a price system for land, within constraints, furnishes indispensable guides.

Thus, *The Great Transformation* is a useful corrective to the economic interpretation of the world, and should be read more and more by economists, particularly those of the Chicago school. But to idolize the book, as youth, especially radical youth, is inclined to do, is to halt analysis with Hegelian antithesis, whereas the need is to go further. The social sciences are in tension with each other, as anyone well knows who has heard debate on the multinational corporation between an economist and a political scientist. The economist tries to take account of the political and social by lumping them as noneconomic factors which must be taken as given along with tastes: if Canada wants to keep out foreign investment on nationalistic grounds, this is acceptable to the economist. Nationalism is a public good, like parks or defense, and an economy can calculate how much nationalism it wants to buy. This approach, however, tends to produce strong negative reactions in the political scientist who comes close to the view that the national identity is an ultimate good which is virtually priceless.

It is a mistake to take any one side in the continuous debate among economics, politics and sociology. Tension among them is inevitable, necessary, and essential to the pursuit of truth. Accordingly I propose to continue to quote Polanyi, though not necessarily to believe everything he says.

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RAYMOND VERNON

The Theory of the Leisure Class by Thorstein Veblen

The Theory of the Leisure Class was published in 1899. Nevertheless, it qualifies as a product of the twentieth century, for that curtain-raising work carried most of the major themes that Veblen would develop in a series of ten remarkable books over the next thirty years.

Remarkable books they were, but not, it appears, very durable. Today, few graduate students of economics study Veblen seriously. Those with an eye on the computer and the econometric model find little in Veblen to carry them over the intellectual hurdles they confront. Those who are reformist or radical in mood, if they know Veblen at all, find him too aloof and old fashioned for their needs. Here and there, Veblen's detached commentary on the predatory capitalist process provides them with a catchword or a phrase for argument, but not much more than that.

Perhaps it is just as well that radicals have not taken much to Veblen. He himself had no use for radicals. *The Leisure Class,* as far as he was concerned, was not a radical tract. It was a scholarly analysis, an effort at understanding, an explanation that was an end in itself. To the extent that Veblen had social values and social preferences, he would probably have denied that they were revealed in *The Leisure Class* or in his other works. The conspicuous waste and the pecuniary emulation that Veblen attributes to the leisure class is, in his view, simply the result of a social process, entitling the actors neither to good marks nor to bad. The legitimate business-like sabotage of captains of finance is an inescapable aspect of their calling. The instinct for workmanship, the propensity for cooperation, and the avoidance of waste which he attributes to workers and engineers are no more to be admired than the characteristics of the leisure class and the captains of finance are to be condemned. Today's social activist, therefore, even if he is attracted by Veblen's ideas, would be repelled by Veblen's way of using them.

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Though Veblen is little read and little quoted in the mainstream of modern economics, it would be too simple to say that he has not affected the direction of that stream. The size of his impact might well have disappointed him, but the effect is surely there.

In Veblen's time, the leading propositions of economics were still taught as a series of laws, derived by deduction from a set of absolute assumptions. To be sure, great economists like Alfred Marshall were perfectly capable of ruminating over the complexities and uncertainties of economic motivation and process, and of revealing their uncertainties in footnotes to the main text. But, on the whole, if Veblen is to be believed, economics was taught as dogma: right was right and wrong was unmentionable.

Veblen's reaction was the predictable response of the perpetually alienated scholar viewing the economics profession morosely from a precarious perch on its fringes. From that perch, he saw the leading economists as a priestly cult, ordained by the University and practicing their rites in accordance with their calling. They were, in his view, more nearly an appendage of the leisure class than of the engineers.

Veblen, on the other hand, professed to build his leading propositions not from dogma but from observations, purportedly drawn from history and anthropology. According to his perceptions, the fundamental tenet of classical economics—that man is driven by a constant weighing of pain-cost against pleasure-gain—was simply not an operational concept. Men's motivations, as Veblen saw them, were various; they were capable of being systematically described, but they were far from being explained by simple-minded hedonistic calculus. I rather suspect that Veblen's own generalizations at times would draw pained reactions from historians and anthropologists. But the question of methodology was at least as important to Veblen as that of substance.

The fact that the empirical side of economics has flourished in the last half century might on first glance be regarded as a triumph for Veblen's views. But some of the empiricism in contemporary economics would surely have left Veblen cold and unapproving. The mechanistic slicing up of available data according to prescribed statistical procedures, so commonly presented in economic journals, was not what Veblen had in mind. That kind of empiricism, I fear, he would have regarded as akin to the ritualistic exercises in deduction which he found so dysfunctional in his contemporaries. In any case, those who abandon themselves to mechanistic data manipulation probably owe that proclivity to the advent of the Hollerith card, the computer, and the canned regression program, not to the empiricism of Veblen.

Still, Veblen's influence can be seen in his impact on key personalities. One branch of his influence is epitomized in the empirical tradition associated with men like Wesley Mitchell and Simon Kuznets; the other in the reformist tradition of such men as R. G. Tugwell and J. K. Galbraith. These men, representing profoundly different brands of empiricism, have influenced economic thinking measurably in their own times; and in the case of Kuznets and Galbraith, the impact is still palpable. It is not clear, however, how much influence empirically minded men of either variety will have on the shape of economics in the long run. Their complex

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and qualified propositions are in constant competition with the elegance and simplicity of propositions drawn from the deductive process. Commencing with the authoritative assertions of conventional wisdom and manipulated through the unambiguous modalities of algebraic or geometric logic, the deductions are bound to command a premium in the intellectual marketplace, even when in substance they may seem shallow.

My admiration for Veblen's splendid spirit of unremitting alienation has, I fear, shone all too obviously through these last few paragraphs. Yet, for all that, I have considerable misgiving over the intrinsic validity of Veblen's own offerings. The impact of his brilliant mind may have been good for the main drift of economics, deflecting it a little bit in more fruitful directions. But the propositions he supported in order to perform that diversionary task may not be altogether defensible.

Take Veblen's distinction between the captain of finance and the engineer, the predatory bargainer and the productive worker, the conspicuous waster and the rational measurer. These delicious dichotomies, seductively appealing though they may be, do not have much to do with the visible facts of the modern corporation. True, contemporary society continues to turn up an unambiguous example of the captain of finance from time to time, a Cornfeld or a Vesco. But how are we to typify the managers of today's great corporations? Some of their problems, to be sure, are of Veblen's pecuniary, predatory variety: decisions on the movement of money, on borrowing and lending, on the advertising budget, on the tactics of bargaining with the oil sheikhs, on influencing competitors' reactions. But decisions on whether to invest in the building of supertankers, whether to build large refineries or small, whether to gamble in the development of commercial shale oil, all involve engineering estimates that are too important to be left to engineers. The teleological, rational, and nonpredatory aspects of those difficult decisions require best guesses over the future cost of various inputs, the future trend of government regulation, the future development of competing sources of energy, the future course of technologies as yet unrevealed. In short, once the costs of uncertainty and information are introduced as elements in the decision process, Veblen's neat dichotomy is in mortal danger.

One could reply perhaps that the distinction between captains of finance and engineers still remains useful, even though captains of finance sometimes find themselves obliged to take a hand in the task of the engineers. But such a reply will never do. The personal values that Veblen attributes to people in these different pursuits are so dramatically at odds that one would be at a loss to say how they could be encased in a single psyche. According to Veblen's definitions, an executive who was made up of one part financier and one part engineer would run a severe risk of schizophrenia. Yet the leaders of many large enterprises today—particularly enterprises engaged in the large-scale development of new processes and products—do have to perform in both of Veblen's main modes. Veblen's taxonomy, therefore, seems to fail the very test on which he himself would insist, namely, that of its empirical utility.

The limitations in usefulness of Veblen's distinction between the pecuniary and the productive can be illustrated from a very different direction, namely, from the ex-

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periences of the Soviet Union. Here we have an economy in which pecuniary motives, as far as most industrial managers are concerned, are effectively subdued or altogether suppressed. Success, as a rule, is measured according to the norms of the national plan; and these norms are usually denominated in physical units.

In order to perform under these unexceptionable standards, however, Soviet managers often find themselves obliged to engage in surreptitious, predatory, and pecuniary tactics. The problem is that the central-planning mechanism does not have—indeed, cannot have—the information needed for a wholly consistent plan; and even if the data were available, the central-planning mechanism could not predict the random events, such as sickness, breakdown, and flood, that throw the plan off kilter from time to time. Accordingly, the manager hedges: he under-reports on inventory and machinery, he swaps materials in a grey market, and he resists the center's instructions to modify products or change processes. In short, in his efforts to operate within the plan under conditions of uncertainty and risk, the manager-engineer takes on some of the attributes of the captain of finance.

If Veblen was wrong to place so much weight on his captain of finance as a useful archetype, he was in even greater error to rely so much on his mythical engineer as a counterpoint. The engineer, of course, does represent a certain kind of rationality in modern life, but like all forms of rationality, that of the engineer is restrained at its limits by a set of unquestioned assumptions. The engineer's form of rationality, therefore, has to be weighed in terms of whether it plays over a wide field or a narrow, and whether the assumptions that apply at the borders of his field make much sense.

In terms of some of the social preferences of the society of the 1970's, the engineer's values may be no more attractive than those of the captians of finance. The skills of engineers are generally supplied within an organization that has an assigned task; and it is notorious that engineers as a class are not given to raising questions about the nature of the task itself. Highway engineers build roads even if mass transit makes more sense. Chemical plant engineers build efficient chemical plants even if efficiency requires polluting the atmosphere. In short, the rationality of the engineer is bounded by the task of the institution with which he is associated.

Moreover, Veblen's assumption that rationality is an ingrained habit of mind among workers and engineers, carried over from their daily occupations into other aspects of their behavior, does not seem self-evident. I have never seen a reliable breakdown of the membership of organizations whose values are primarily predatory, honorific, nonteleological and wasteful, such as local poker societies, investment clubs, drag-racing associations, and the Ku Klux Klan. But I am prepared to guess that engineers are not under-represented in any of these organizations, as compared with commission brokers or race horse jockeys or corporate directors. Indeed, as far as politics is concerned, I would not be surprised to discover that the engineer's preference for the avoidance of ambiguity had generated a slight bias in favor of dogmatic and authoritarian political solutions.

It may be that in the last days of the nineteenth century waste, leisure, gaming, and the predatory instinct were more easily associated with the captains of finance

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than with the working classes. But casual observation suggests that the association is badly eroded by now, if indeed it ever existed. I myself prefer Linder's *The Harried Leisure Class* as an efficient framework for analyzing the leisure pursuits and preferences of captains of finance and of the modern industrial worker.

Yet, for all the perishability of Veblen's ideas, I suspect he would have reveled in the nature of some of those very findings of modern researchers that have tended to make his own observations obsolete. The increased emphasis on risk and uncertainty in the theory of economic choice, for instance, would have given him pleasure, though some of the mechanistic efforts to capture these ideas in simple econometric relationships might have set his teeth on edge. The attempts of the behavioralists to throw light on the motivations of modern business organizations would have been grist for his mill, though I suspect he might have enjoyed Galbraith rather more than Cyert. The idea that managers might prefer growth to profits, status to yield, and security to practically anything else would be in a neo-Veblenian mold, even though it might reduce even further the utility of the conclusions of classical Veblen.

The clue to Veblen's genius lay in his alienation, in his resistance to the conventional wisdom of his time, and in his indifference to the logical propositions that derived from such wisdom. He provided that critical counterweight in the search for human understanding which is constantly needed to remind us that we have not yet arrived.

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JUDITH N. SHKLAR

The Education of Henry Adams by Henry Adams

AUTOBIOGRAPHIES ARE NOT always meant to be self-revealing or even personal. Indeed, "antimemoirs" are quite common. It is an obvious impulse of the historicist mind to place even its own life within the stream of public events and look at it as might some future historian. The passion for objectivity can be so strong that it imposes impersonality even upon the memory of a past self. To write a public autobiography one must have a public life of general intellectual concern, and a rich public scene in which to lose the self. It is not difficult to compose such memoirs if one stands in the shadow of a Mao or a de Gaulle and is engulfed by great causes. In the absence of great men and enormous upheavals, however, the recreation of a public self is impossible. This is not the least of the lessons taught by *The Education of Henry Adams*.

The writer who looks upon himself as a public actor is generally quite overtly hostile to the egoism of those who choose to present their deepest feelings and most intimate relationships to public scrutiny. When measured by a purely public and especially political standard, such revelations count for no more than the most petty trivialities of daily life. He is also remote from the confessing self, which looks for expiation through the exposure of its sins and crimes. Confessions are at least partially didactic in intent and are therefore rather less private than autobiographies of pure self-remembrance. However, they also depend for their interest entirely on the genius and intelligence of the author.*

Henry Adams certainly set out to write a public autobiography, a book as different from Rousseau's *Confessions* as possible. However, his only public ex-

* The writer may choose either to instruct or to entertain, but his success in either enterprise depends on the personality he presents. The private character revealed in a public autobiography matters a great deal less.

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perience was his "education," his effort to find and grasp a significant public place in post-Civil War America. Education is inevitably personal, since it involves not only the teaching world, but also a learning individual. Adams, despite all his contempt for egotism, was driven to write a thoroughly self-centered book. Among other things, it was in fact a confession. And he had much to confess. He was a failure: he had, at least in his own eyes, committed the worst of American sins. Not only had he failed to meet the standards of public eminence set by his ancestors, but he had not achieved his own intellectual ends either. To be sure he set himself astronomical goals. With these in mind, he was able to concentrate all his immense Puritan energies on his own worthlessness. The result is a matchless contribution to the literature of pure sadness. For there was, in his world, no redemption, no posterity, and no God to forgive or condemn him. There was nothing but regret.

Henry Adams understood all this perfectly. As a boy he too "should have been like his grandfather, a protégé of George Washington, a statesman designated by destiny, with nothing to do but look directly ahead, follow orders, and march." Instead he was an exile from politics, not only because he was not anchored to a great man or a noble cause, but because he was a born spectator. His character was his real fate. Probably no child born in 1838 "held better cards than he," but he never played the game at all; "he lost himself in study of it." The one path that never occurred to him when he graduated from Harvard was "going West and growing with the country." If he had no preparation for such an adventure, neither had anyone else, but he lacked in addition, daring and imagination. Unlike some of his classmates he did not have to think about making a name for himself. His social position was so good it could not be improved, but it made him afraid of risks. "He took to the pen. He wrote." In short, he was inescapably intellectual—aloof and critical. Education, certain knowledge, was what he really needed, and his quest for it proved interminable. For a man with his forebears such a situation had its ironies. They had certainly been learned men, scholar-statesmen, as well as active politicians, yet, as he looked back upon them with a historian's eyes, he saw that he knew far more than they could ever have guessed. But what was the use of all his accumulated wisdom if it only made him futile, baffled, and passive?

Irony hovers over every page of *The Education*. It begins with the declared purpose of showing young men what sort of education might be useful to them, at least what sorts of "tools" they ought to be given for dealing with the future. However, it is at once clear that no example, certainly not Adams', can be of any value. Youth does not need models, and he is certainly a warning at best, since he was never fit for life. That is why he begins by referring to himself disparagingly as a mere "manikin." He goes on, however, to reveal an even greater irony. His final discovery was that not only his education but all education was pointless, whether it was his own obsolete eighteenth-century one or an up-to-date version. No one could be shown how to cope with an inscrutable, ever-changing world. He did not find a science that could predict the social future accurately and without that no one could really be taught how to adapt. The very idea of an education that prepared young people for success was a delusion. That is his ultimate message and he begins by hinting at it.

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Self-deprecation and irony were not Henry Adams' sole purposes in writing this book. He also had a quite independent, perhaps never fully admitted, aesthetic design. Memory is capable not only of every mood, but also of creativity. Adams had an immensely constructive memory. He was not really interested in accurate recollection at all. If he had seriously intended to help train young men, he would, of course, have had to make every effort to reveal the exact chain of causes and effects by which he had been educated. In fact, however, his promise of a manual is an ironic joke. What signifies here is not the past as such, but its remembrance as a free activity of the present imagination. The actual journey, he wrote of his first boyhood trip to Washington, was probably quite different from the one he remembered, but "only the memory matters." The memory had to have a meaning; the old man had to add a great deal to the original, often vividly recalled experiences of the boy. Each recollection has a double bearing: a primary sensation and a transforming reflection. The book as a whole is constructed to achieve this effect. Its first half takes us up to the end of youth; the second deals with the speculations of the prematurely old man twenty years later. The old Adams, the creator of the young one, is present on every page from the beginning, until he finally appears openly in his own person, the man he has become and now judges. By juxtaposing the two selves, the remembered youth and the remembering old man, the evoked memories and the cumulative reflections, Adams was able to sustain the mood of sadness without a break. No reader can escape the atmosphere of disappointment and sorrow. It is utterly depressing.

Even if Adams had been a cheerful soul, his would have been painful memories. The Civil War was at the core of his young manhood, the point toward and from which everything led. He did not see it as a tragedy. He, who often claimed that his countrymen lacked a sense of the tragic, was in this respect, as in all else, distinctly American. Three presidential assassinations, Adams noticed, could not raise the specter of the Eumenides before eyes that looked upon death as a neurosis. But one may well ask whether those assassinations really were tragic. Only Lincoln's was part of a tragic drama. To Adams, however, the Civil War was the result partly of ignorance, partly of treason. As he saw it, some Southerners plotted rebellion, but most of America's political leaders were simply too incompetent to avert a war that no one wanted. As for the issues at stake, in his simple Puritan vision, they were simply right against wrong: slavery was an evil and the sole purpose of life was to fight evil. It never occurred to Adams that slavery was more than a wrong to be undone once and for all, that it was an ineradicable curse that would not be ended in a battle but would haunt future generations and poison the body politic. That is why, for the most part, the aftermath of the carnage seemed puzzling to him. The Civil War appeared as an inexplicable, accidental destruction of the old America into which he had been born. He spoke of that former world, especially of New England, as Cromwellian in spirit and Ciceronian in politics. Who during Grant's administration could still believe that there would be a new Jerusalem and a new Roman Republic in America's green and pleasant land? Who has believed it since? For Adams the memory of what America had been, in hope, if not in actuality, gave the Civil War its ambiguity and sadness. He saw it as a just war that had unfortunate, but not really tragic, results.

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The Civil War left Henry Adams with an overwhelming sense of historical paradox which colored all the memories of his youth. The dirty disordered roads of the South with the horror of slavery everywhere terrified the twelve-year-old boy on his first visit to Washington. He only wanted to run away from it, but the Senate and Mount Vernon impressed the boy. The old man added a reflective memory: the evil of slavery somehow led to Mount Vernon, the symbol of American virtue, and the two were apparently inextricably tied together. Long before the story of the war begins, it is already present. The old man's memory rearranges time and feelings to reveal that the war that abolished slavery also destroyed the America for which Mount Vernon stood. Complexity of this order is a sort of lament. Again, as a schoolboy, Henry had found the big snowball fights on Boston Common exhilarating; Old Adams could still remember the names of the bravest of his school fellows. Was it there, he wondered, that they had learned how to die in battle? Young Henry did not learn much at Harvard, but he was evidently very popular and enjoyed his years there. Old Adams saw what a disaster that self-satisfaction had been. It meant that Harvard only confirmed the quiet, well-bred sons of New England in a docility which would soon sweep them all into war. The Southerners, like Robert E. Lee's son Rooney, were not civilized at Harvard. They were animals when they arrived and they were still animals when they graduated and returned to the South. Harvard changed no one. It failed to create a new American elite or to teach the old one how to survive. That is why, in memory, old Adams came to hate old schools, especially his own. They had failed to educate his generation in the art of survival. The pleasures of his actual years at Harvard were covered by the memory of the war. So was his account of his first trip to Rome, which he, like all young people of "either sex and every race—passionately, perversely, wickedly loved." But the old historian recalled also how often he sat on the steps of the Church of Santa Maria di Ara Coeli where Gibbon had first thought of writing about the decline and fall of Rome. He too asked the eternal question: Why? "Substitute the word America for Rome and the question became personal."

When the war finally broke out Henry Adams went to London to help his father who was Lincoln's Minister to England. What met him there was the undeviating hostility of the government and ruling classes to the North and general sympathy for the South. Dealing with Her Majesty's Government turned out to be extremely difficult, but Minister Adams and his son thought that they came to understand the motives and policies of its individual members. Old Henry Adams could recall every move and countermove in the diplomatic duel, but he saw that all his certainties had been fantasies when he read the published papers of his erstwhile opponents. The Adamses had both been wrong about almost everyone. Even the diplomacy of the Civil War turned out, in retrospect, to have been paradoxical, a series of misunderstandings. Indeed, the ambiguity of the war had been brought home to him long before these historical revelations. When he returned to America after seven years in England he found, as did those of his contemporaries who had spent those years in the Army, that he had no place in his own country. No one could settle down or find a career. In Adams' case the resulting uneasiness was aggravated by the

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realization that his unfitness was due not only to the social and political transformation of America, but to his own temperament. Nevertheless, his most striking memory is that of returning to the world of Grant's administration, of Jay Gould, of railroads and expansion everywhere. Adams' reaction was one of helpless revulsion. Yet, even as he ranted and raged against the social outcome of the war, he hastened to add that he was not fit to set it right.

Post-war America was not the first glimpse that Adams had of this new order of capitalism and industrial development. Years before the war he had seen the Black District of the Midlands and reacted to it as he had to his first sight of slavery, with fear and dismay. He ran away. Old Adams, however, remembered the man who had stayed to look, and whose doctrines troubled all his later years. The boy did not know it, but Karl Marx "was standing there waiting for him." After the war, when he was confronted by the Industrial Revolution at home, he should, by rights, have been a Marxist, "but some narrow trait of New England nature seemed to blight socialism, and he tried in vain to make himself a convert." It is not at all clear what it was in the New England mind that Adams was thinking of. Surely New England has produced more than its share of radicals, and many a socialist among them. It is not difficult, however, to discover what it was in Henry Adams that inhibited him from taking such a step. He simply feared and hated the men and women whose physical labor was building industrial America. As a boy he had been afraid of the rough youngsters from the other side of Boston Common. Now he looked upon that extreme example of the European immigrant—"the Polish Jew fresh from Warsaw or Cracow . . . reeking of the Ghetto, snarling a weird Yiddish"—and felt defeated. The sheer energy of these repellent creatures made them far more fit for the new America than he was as an "American of Americans with Heaven knows how many Puritans and Patriots behind him and an education that cost a civil war." That education and that war had rendered him as obsolete as the Indian and the buffalo "who had been ejected from their heritage" by his ancestors. The old man saw the paradox even in his own, to him wholly unfair, situation.

To a man with such predispositions, socialism was clearly an impossible ideology, however right Marx may have been about capitalism and the economic interpretation of history. But a hatred of capitalism need not lead to socialism; it can take other political directions. Adams did not follow any of them; he simply withdrew from politics. That had been implicit all along. He was morally too fastidious and regarded the prospect of "Machiavelli translated to America" as something to be generally avoided as part of the wicked Old World. Even the normal course of party politics was too much for him. His father and his Free Soil friends did not disdain the managerial talent of Thurloe Weed. Even Henry Adams came to like him personally, although he continued to find the lessons he taught indigestible. If these were the laws of party politics Adams wanted none of it. He had "hitched his star" to the cause of reform, but he was not willing to do anything to bring it about. A job in the State Department would have suited him very well, but no one offered him one, and he consoled himself, in a fashion, by reflecting that nothing could be done in Grant's administration by anyone anyway. It all proved that the moral system and the

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political order of 1789 were dead and past salvation. The Constituton was no longer adequate, any more than other remnants of the eighteenth century, including himself. We are not told what changes and reforms he contemplated. The truth is that he was too skeptical and too uncompromising for any kind of political action. Even a late fling at "Silver" was only an exercise in eighteenth-century nostalgia. When he spoke of himself as an anarchist, he meant merely that he was dissociated.

The final chapter of old Adams' memories of his youth has the simple title, "Failure." It tells of his leaving Washington, all his political hopes expired, to become a professor of medieval history at Harvard. This flight to the academy was no disgrace; he called it "the only honorable service" possible in America. Why then was it failure? It was a failure partly because he did not believe in academic education, and partly because he came to see his experiences at Harvard as foreshadowing all the sadness he was to feel as an old man. It was a matter both of political disappointment, and of intellectual despair. Henry Adams was clearly an excellent teacher and he knew that his students often worked hard. To be sure, medieval history was not his field, but he mastered it. Like most good teachers, he was tormented by worry about his impact upon his students. Was he doing them any good? He feared that he was useless to them. Moreover, he found faculty life a bore. After seven years he had had enough and left the university. The no longer youthful Adams now had to face himself. He was an intellectual, not a statesman; he had no social role and was not at all confident that his vocation had any value. He who needed an education could not bring himself to sell one to others. A man so flawed could not be a teacher. He had failed in his one attempt at a career, and could not find any merit in his true calling: to be the historian of his country.

What would success be like? Old Henry Adams was not at all sure that he knew. It required social position and polish, as well as wealth. One without the others would not suffice. He himself clearly craved something more: political power gained on his own terms. He was caught in that recurrent crisis of aristocratization that marked his own generation and is endemic in periods of economic expansion in America. Essentially, this is a crisis of people who have gained everything America has to offer, who continue to feel a deep native drive to achieve ever more, but who cannot find anything at home still worthy of the effort. Some feel that, as members of distinguished and wealthy families, they should be treated with automatic deference. Such feelings combined with social ambition led the wives of new millionaires to marry off their daughters quite brutally to the redundant members of the European aristocracy. Others went to live in England and France where the wealthy could enjoy a more leisurely, stylish and effortless sort of life. Some men, unwilling to continue in the businesses or professions of their fathers, but not ready to leave America, looked to politics as a new arena. Especially when America became a world power, at the end of the century, foreign affairs here became, as it always had been in Europe, an occupation fit for gentlemen. And some, like Henry Adams, felt victimized by their position and became either very reactionary or very radical or both by turns.

Henry Adams was completely aware of these tendencies in himself and among

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his contemporaries, and he was far too reflective and intelligent to lapse into any of the more common forms of social pretentiousness. Lothrop Motley, who succeeded Henry Adams' father in London, thought the English country house "the height of civilization," but Adams knew it to be a silly bore. He was utterly contemptuous of those Bostonians who "knelt in self-abasement before the majesty of English standards," or who, like Charles Sumner, boasted of their friendships among English earls and dukes. Adams' father, much to his credit, had no trace of snobbery and no sense of social distinctions at all. He thought that Europe corrupted young Americans and looked upon the English as the perpetual enemies of America and his family. The son admired the father and agreed. He saw the French as immoral and superficial, and the English as stupid, coarse and eccentric. The central experience of his youth was the uniform hostility of the British upper classes to the cause of the Union. He never forgot it, and all his old feelings of outrage rose in him again during the Boer War. The only Englishmen who had supported the Northern side were Cobden and Bright and he continued to admire the latter for his tireless hatred of sham in all its guises. Henry Adams was proud of his family and he did not wish to cease being an American. He understood England too well, in any case, to suffer from the illusion that an American expatriate might become a genuine part of English society. Adams had many friends in England and loved London, but he was too smart to become a pseudo-Englishman. A literary genius like his friend Henry James is always in and out of any society and must suit his residence to the demands of his art. A historian is in a different situation and Adams made his mark as an American historian. Nevertheless, for all his pride in his ancestors, he had aristocratic aspirations that were foreign to them. He also wanted to be a statesman, but not a democratic one. His father had not been too proud to be a Congressman and his grandfather, a veritable Cincinnatus, had returned modestly to the House of Representatives after having been President. Henry Adams never thought of such a career. If he had been offered the opportunity, he would have entered the State Department at the top in order to frustrate, as best he could, the provincial, petty designs of the subhumans who now populated the Senate. Ill luck and personal deficiencies combined to thwart this idea of success. Unhappily, Adams took to sour grapes. As he watched the rise of his closest friend, John Hay, to the pinnacle of public eminence, it became impossible to blame his age or his countrymen for his failures. He declared that he was really most useful to his country as a private citizen and fulminated more and more against the dreadful corruptions of political power as such. Office, he said, ruined character and destroyed all friendships.

The embittering experience of always missing office was not the only source of Adams' discontent. There was intellectual misery as well. Society offers historians only one social function: teaching. Adams could not accept it. He could afford just to write, which he did very well and enjoyed, even if he noted that Americans had no interest in the past and that he had no more than perhaps three adequate readers. At least he did not envy his English opposite numbers. He was aware that the Oxford graduate was in the same boat as the Harvard man. Indeed, unlike many American intellectuals, Adams realized that there was no lack of first-rate minds in America.

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He knew who Willard Gibbs was and recognized the quality of his achievement. His self-doubt went deeper. The old Puritan wanted to be useful, and he did not think history a useful vocation. It did not yield certain knowledge, nor did it help one to predict the future. Since his days at Harvard, he had, like many another literary man, suffered at the sight of the economist, the physicist, and the chemist, who knew exactly what they were doing and why they did it. The Chicago Exhibition of 1893 was the final shock. Utterly shaken, Henry Adams tried to master mathematics and physics. The only outcome was his disastrous decision to fashion a science of history on these models. History was to reveal laws of social change. He had read his Comte, Spencer and Buckle carefully, and knew that they had failed. That did not deter him. He took to using metaphors drawn from physics, and analogies to it, in writing history. *Mass, energy, motion, acceleration,* and words like these now dominated his vocabulary as he tried to show how European society had moved from the unity of the Middle Ages to the disintegration and diversity of the present. For in the end Henry Adams had to return to Europe, spiritually at least. That, after all, is where America began and the attempt to understand its present degradation led him back to the age of the cathedrals. But in spite of all his efforts to do so, he could not believe in Christianity, and theology was beyond him. His twin symbols, the Virgin and the dynamo, tell us more about his psyche than about medieval Europe. No unifying vision emerged and in spite of the words he borrowed from Newton, history remained incoherent. Finally Henry Adams realized that the sciences did not even offer a road to cosmic order and unity. He found some satisfaction in the thought that at least confusion reigned everywhere, not only in the minds of American historians.

These multiple failures, political and intellectual, turned old Henry Adams, in his own words, into "a crank" and "a tiresome superannuated pedagogue." He also became commonplace as he "drifted in the dead-water of the *fin-de-siècle.*" When the age discovered sex, race and religion, so did Henry Adams, both as a historian and as an ill-tempered bigot. Without a real calling, intellectual or religious, this last Puritan withered amid the roaring energies of his age and country. He had failed to govern, or even to know America, and he had spent a lifetime observing himself fail. He knew as clearly as anyone that he should have ended his life a better and happier man. Unlike him, however, we can see that his *Education* was not a failure, that his confession redeemed his life and that, in spite of his irony, he has taught his readers much.

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CARL N. DEGLER

Woman as Force in History by Mary Beard

Woman as Force in History was never a best seller; even today when women's history is burgeoning as a discipine, it is available only in paperback. When it was published in 1946, to be sure, it was quite widely reviewed and generally favorably. Most reviewers found it scholarly, while a few went so far as to predict that it would reshape the subsequent writing of history. Yet today scholars rarely refer to it, and its influence on the writing of history is virtually undiscoverable. In a brief reference to Beard's death in 1958 the *American Historical Review* made no comment on the book and misstated the title. Furthermore, it must be admitted that the book is not well written. Beard was no stylist, though she could write clearly enough.

The book's significance lies in its future. Only today, with the new interest in the history of women, has the book begun to be recognized. Despite its title, however, its ideological feminism is not what makes it important. In fact, a striking thing about the book is that it is frankly antifeminist. At the time of Beard's death, *The New York Times* reported that "Mrs. Beard was no ardent feminist."[1] The book, indeed, argues openly and forcefully against feminists, both male and female. Among those singled out for extended criticism, for example, are Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill.

To put the matter quite bluntly, a central point of the book is that the feminist conception of women's history is wrong. As Beard reads the literature of feminism she finds that the subjection of women is taken for granted rather than proved; in fact, "The Subjection of Women" is the very title of Mill's great tract. The assumption serves, too, as the launching pad from which the rockets of nineteenth-century feminist polemics took off. The feminists, in truth, were convinced that women had been both the slaves of men and the ciphers of history.

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The classic formulation of the doctrine of subjection, Beard reminds us, was Blackstone's dictum of the Common Law that in marriage the interests of the husband and the wife were one, and that one was the husband's. And it is true that among American feminists Blackstone's summation was a staple argument. It was used so often that Beard assigns to Blackstone the principal responsibility for the widespread acceptance of what she calls the "dogma of women's complete subjection to man." One suspects that the reason she assigns such importance to Blackstone's influence is that by refuting his dictum she can demonstrate that women were in fact not subject to men; she stigmatizes the belief that they were as "one of the most fantastic myths ever created by the human mind."[2]

Her argument is essentially that Blackstone was not a reliable interpreter of the legal status of women. Contrary to the impression derived from a reading of Blackstone's *Commentaries*, the Common Law was not the sole legal definition of the rights of women. Alongside the Common Law was the law of equity, a branch of law that grew up during the Middle Ages as an explicit and important qualification to the Common Law. Among its qualifications were a series of interpretations protecting a woman's property from her husband's control after marriage. Under the Common Law a married woman lost all control of her property, but a prudent father or male relative, through equity proceedings, could easily prevent her husband from having access to her property. Under equity, a wife could even make a contract with her husband. In short, Beard's criticism of the feminists and others who quoted Blackstone to demonstrate the subjection of women is that they simply did not know their legal history. Furthermore, with, one imagines, a mischievous glint in her eye, Beard also points out that equity developed under the aegis of male judges and legislators, without any prodding from feminists. Indeed, she went even further, observing that in New York in 1848 the legislature passed the first married women's property act without any help or advice from the feminists who that very same year met at Seneca Falls to draw up their famous Declaration of Women's Rights.

Ignoring equity law was the first error made by those who contended that women were legally subject to men. The second was to assume that Blackstone's interpretation of the Common Law was itself accurate. Relying on the work of the highly respected legal historian, Frederick Maitland, Beard shows that married women had many more rights under the Common Law, even in medieval times, than Blackstone reported. But it is not only Blackstone against whom Beard is contending; she is also after the feminists who quoted him. Hence she goes on to point out that not even Blackstone asserted that the Common Law discriminated against single women. For during the nineteenth century, as a modern legal authority has pointed out, insofar as property rights were concerned, "single women enjoyed almost equal legal status with single males."[3]

Beard's lengthy disputing of Blackstone and the arguments that rested on him is certainly impressive. Yet one has the impression that she overstates the argument. Equity may have been an important loophole in the Common Law as far as women were concerned, but it was only available to those who knew of it and could afford to invoke it. Moreover, if the Common Law was so easily circumvented by women seek-

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ing to control their own property, why was it necessary to enact married women's property acts in both England and the United States? The answer can only be that equity was not sufficiently available to most women to temper the harsh legal subordination of women to their husbands imposed by the Common Law. But Beard's additional thrust against the feminist reading of the past still stands: it was men who initiated and carried through these particular improvements in the legal rights of women.

When one appreciates that Beard's argument with regard to Blackstone undercut one of the favorite polemics of nineteenth-century feminists, then one can understand why she is not usually thought of as a feminist. One can understand it, but one ought not to believe it. For her criticism of Blackstone is only a part of her larger purpose, which is to examine critically the tradition that "women were members of a subject sex throughout history."[4] Her method is to bring together a great number of examples of women's past activities that historians and others have either overlooked or subordinated in writing about the activities of human beings. She shows, for example, that male historians of the stature of Henri Pirenne and Charles Gross could write about guilds in the Middle Ages and yet omit the patent fact that women were important and active participants in them. Or that the American historian John Spencer Bassett taught women at Smith College for years, yet when he came to write on the state of society in the eighteenth century he said nothing about the status or activities of women as such. She made the same case positively as well as negatively. The first book she ever wrote, *Women's Work in Municipalities* (1915), was a survey of the great variety of women's activities in American cities during the first decade or so of the twentieth century; and the last book she published was a study of *The Force of Women in Japanese History*, in which she showed quite concretely the variety and importance of the roles played by women in Japan from the days of the Sun Goddess to the achievement of the ballot in the era of MacArthur. Beard's rejection of the thesis of subjection may place her outside the grand feminist tradition, but her emphasis upon the constant and active role of women in the past puts her squarely in the midst of those who are fundamentally feminist in outlook.

Beard's feminism is evident, too, in her deliberate countering of the stereotypes of women. She sees that when women are stereotyped their individual opportunities are limited and their social growth is stunted. As her evidence drawn from the history of the Middle Ages makes clear, women were often psychically tough, physically muscular, and socially aggressive. Beard delights, for example, in recounting instances of women who physically beat their husbands or fought and won organized armed conflicts with males. Her interest in breaking the traditional molds comes through most clearly in a passage that follows a series of examples in which women performed jobs or filled roles usually associated with men, sometimes the roughest of men. These facts, she comments, "certainly do not show that the women of the Middle Ages were all on the side of civilization—or all against it."[5]

In the end there can be no doubt that, for all her castigation of feminists for their ill-advised acceptance of Blackstone or for disseminating what she calls the myth of subjection, Beard was a feminist. What she wanted above all was that women be ac-

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corded their rightful place in history, that they be included in written history just as fully as they were in actual history. Superficially, at least, this demand seems reasonable enough. And when one has read in her book of the ways in which male historians have ignored women in writing history, indignation as well as reason demands some redress.

Yet, it is just at this point that Beard falters. For if we ask why women ought to be included in written history, she provides us with no other answer than that they were active in the past. But surely that indicates a rather unsophisticated interpretation of the nature of history. Literally thousands of events occurred in any year of the past yet only a fraction of them get into written history. There is selection in any written history regardless of its fullness or length. The great nineteenth-century historian Leopold von Ranke may have said that history ought to be written as it actually happened, but the fact is that written history is only that part of the past in which we are interested. Undoubtedly we have a great variety of interests in the past, but it is always our concerns about the present that determine which of the myriad facts of the past become known as "history." In short, if, as Beard argues, a special point should be made to bring women into history, then some reason for doing so must be advanced. Did women, for example, have a different history from that of men? Does the failure to include women in history falsify our accurate understanding of the past, and, if so, how? What, precisely, do we lose by omitting women?

Beard never answers any of these questions because she does not ask them. Yet it is possible to show that ignoring women may well falsify our understanding of the past. Some years ago, for example, David M. Potter pointed out in a trenchant essay on women in American culture that Frederick Jackson Turner's interpretation of the meaning of the frontier in American history actually applies only to men. It was men who lost their independence when the city supplanted the frontier as the dominant domicile of Americans; women gained economic independence and a wider variety of life styles. By omitting women from his analysis, Turner was at least half wrong before he began.

A further justification for including women in history is that to do so would have a transforming effect upon women. They would see that as women they have been participants in the past too, that they have been involved in the significant human events which provide much of the meaning in people's lives. To recognize oneself as related in some way to the participants in written history is to be a part of human experience beyond oneself. Certainly that recognition is one of the rewards men derive from reading about or knowing of the thoughts and actions of past men. It is certainly a central justification for history as a humanistic discipline. When women are omitted from history they are denied that sense of participation in the ongoing stream of human experience. Although she did not make that argument in *Woman as Force in History,* it is easy to believe that Beard had it in mind as she repeatedly called for women to be included in history. It was very probably in the forefront of her mind when she criticized Professor Bassett for teaching women at Smith while failing to include them in his written history. Mary Beard was never concerned merely that history reflect the fullness of the past for its own sake. She, after all, like

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her more famous husband, Charles A. Beard, was no antiquarian. Both of them viewed history as instrumental as well as didactic.

Unfortunate as Mary Beard's failure to articulate why women ought to be included in written history may be, it is not surprising. Indeed, the need to justify their inclusion in theoretical terms is a contemporary as well as a historical problem. Those who omit women from history, whether by design or from ignorance, generally do so because they simply do not see women as having a history different from that of men. And unless a difference is delineated, there is no compelling reason for including women when we write about the past. By insisting that women be remembered and included, Beard at least raised the issue, even if she left its justification to others. It is at this juncture that we begin to get at the real significance of Beard's book for the study of women's history and history in general. The book raises fundamental questions about written history even when Beard herself does not canvass them fully, much less confront them.

Sometimes, of course, she is quite direct in raising such issues. In discussing the feminist argument for women's rights, Beard observed that equality had been seized upon as the proper answer to the subjection of women. But as she cogently pointed out, equality is a difficult term to define with regard to women. It is not that she had any doubts that women should have equal opportunities for jobs or equal pay for equal work. But, as she knew, it is one thing to end discrimination against women in education or jobs, and quite another thing to define what equality means between husband and wife. She listed, for example, a number of questions that have no easy resolution within the context of equality as it is usually understood. "May a wife take her separate property, enter business, and, without his consent, compete with her husband who is legally liable for her support?" "If a woman earns money by keeping roomers and boarders in a house owned by her husband, are her earnings all her own and beyond reach of his creditors?" "If the wife has separate property is the husband bound to support her in complete idleness out of his property and earnings?"

Nor are these questions as legalistic or specialized as they may appear. They actually point to an important issue in the history of women—namely, that however close the analogy may be between women and other minorities, it is not precise. In thinking about women, it is often helpful to relate their experiences to those of blacks, or Catholics, or Jews. But there are significant differences. Women are certainly a minority under some circumstances, but they are also a sex and in that way different from every other minority—racial, religious, or ethnic. For if men are the oppressors of women on one level, on another they also have distinct and powerful interests in protecting rather than exploiting them. The development of equity law and the passage of the married women's property acts by men are concrete examples of this truth. Men may have wives whose property they covet, but they also have daughters and mothers whose property they desire to protect. The model of the oppressed group, Beard cogently warns us, is all too easily and thoughtlessly applied to women.

Finally, there is another way in which Beard's book raises important questions for modern historians of women. In the course of discussing the way in which women have

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affected history, Beard gives instances—some of them quite familiar—of family rivalries in ancient Rome, the Middle Ages, Renaissance Europe, and at other times and places. As she rightly says, the family has long been basic to men's concerns; it has often been the family that has made policy or determined goals, whether at the highest or the lowest levels of society. Her point is that modern historians have too often individualized history, thereby doing violence to the complex ways in which social change—which is one definition of history—takes place. Throughout a number of areas of history, one is struck again and again by recurring references to family fortunes, family feuds, family rivalries, family estates, or family dynasties. The family, Beard reminds us, does not and never has consisted solely of men, but rather of men and women in interaction. Usually the only time we historians take cognizance of the way in which women have influenced, if not determined, history is when biographers take the trouble to look into the family influences that surround and affect their subjects. The issue, however, is not to discover whether men or women "determined" history, but to examine the way the interaction within the family, between men and women—sisters and brothers, as well as husbands and wives—determined the policy and line of action the *family* followed.

Beard, in short, is saying that women will be recognized for the force they have been even in traditional history when we cease to individualize and thereby masculinize the actors of history by abstracting them from the family context in which they really functioned. The evidential problem, of course, is that we often have many more sources on how a statesman or ruler acted or thought as an individual than we do on his or her relations with other members of his family. Correspondence, which is the evidential mainstay of much written history, usually does not flow between husbands and wives. Yet in our own lives and in the lives of contemporary leaders too, we know that intrafamilial relations have profound effects upon public or extrafamilial activities. The influence of Lady Bird Johnson on the Johnson presidency is surely important, for example, but one wonders whether there is adequate historical documentation for future historians ever to reconstruct it.

Today the study of the history of the family is a rising new field; social historians have new tools of analysis as well as new conceptions. And historians of women too now recognize that it is in the family that a large part of the history of women, as opposed to the history of feminism or of the suffrage, took place. Not all modern feminists, to be sure, will like the kind of women's history that will come out of the history of the family. One could, for example, interpret much of it as portraying women as "appendages" to great public men, but to do so would be unfortunate, for it would mean falling into the trap of defining women's history as precisely the same as men's, to be measured against male standards of achievement. A better way of viewing the issue is to recognize that the new emphasis on family history will bring women into the mainstream of history as women, not as men. Up to now it has been our obsession with the individual and our neglect of the family that has excluded women from that mainstream.

In one of the most critical reviews given to Beard's book when it was first published in 1946, Professor J. H. Hexter, now of Yale University, contended that

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Beard's complaint that women were ignored in written history was unjustified. He asserted that the reason they were not included in standard history books was that historians were concerned with the processes of change over time and that, since women were not important in such processes, they were not legitimate subjects of history. "We know who was mainly behind those trends and developments and movements," Hexter wrote in *The New York Times*. "For better or for worse, it was the men." Do not blame male historians for the omission, Hexter warned. When historians looked for sources of power in the past,

> they found men. On the occasions in which they happened to find women they usually noted the exception; but through no conspiracy on the part of historians the College of Cardinals, the Consistory of Geneva, the Parliament of England, the Faculty of the Sorbonne, the Directorate of the Bank of England, and the expeditions of Columbus, Vasco da Gama and Drake have been pretty much stag affairs.[6]

As far as he goes, Hexter is right enough. But the point that is implicit in Beard's book is not met by Hexter's criticism. She was implying what she ought to have made crystal clear: history, as traditionally defined, is too narrow. It is perfectly true, as Hexter wrote, that government, banking, higher education, exploration, and military affairs—the activities symbolized by his list of institutions—have been in the hands of men. (Beard would rightly add that there were often more women active in these areas than historians have acknowledged, but that would not weaken Hexter's essential argument.) The point is, however, that these conventionally masculine areas of endeavor constitute neither the totality of the human past nor the full range of sources of social change. The content of history has never been fixed or static. Today, social history, with its emphasis upon the family, reform, education, and the working class, is reshaping that content. And in the course of that reshaping, women are emerging as integral and functioning participants in history, as more than mere appendages to men or human equivalents to Dr. Johnson's dog that danced on its hind legs. Here too, *Woman as Force in History* speaks to modern historians by reminding us that only by altering its scope can history begin to tell us what we need to know, instead of merely answering what traditionally we have asked.

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Revolt of the Masses by José Ortega y Gassett

ORTEGA Y GASSETT'S CENTRAL thesis in *Revolt of the Masses* was hardly new. Since the Reign of Terror, European intellectuals, poets, and men of letters have repeatedly voiced their dread lest "lower orders" obtain the "rights of man" and consequently gain a vast and vulgar influence over every aspect of life and thought.

Even such radical revolutionaries as Marx and Lenin never trusted the *Lumpen-proletariat* to work effectively for the establishment of its own terrestrial paradise, though their militant belief in such bliss might have led the typical observer to suppose the contrary. It is no wonder that Marx vilified Bakunin (who saw through this disingenuousness) for his excessive trust in the common man.

To be sure, in the centuries preceding the French Revolution, most of humanity, if not reduced to virtual slavery, was held in the lowest esteem by the fortunate few. Thus, for example, Luther's brutal attitude toward his fervent adherents during the Peasants' Revolt scarcely exhibited his exceptional spiritual gifts. Once the *philosophes* and humanitarians had laid the intellectual groundwork for the age of the masses, however, the widespread contempt of later humanitarians for the fruits of this labor became ideologically suspect as well as morally ambivalent. It was, after all, one thing for a sixteenth-century religious reformer to throw his lot in with the nobility; it is quite another for modern reformers speaking on behalf of artisans, peasants, and workers to dissociate themselves from this social class.

In the nineteenth century the term *masses* was as often associated with the Philistine elements of the bourgeoisie as with the laboring classes. When John Stuart Mill spoke of the "tyranny of the majority," he included in that majority all those from any stratum of society who would be more readily bored reading Coleridge or Wordsworth than they would consuming large amounts of cheesecake. Mill's veneration of intellectuality was so extreme and, for that matter, so naive, that he never succeeded in reconciling his own kind of rarefied happiness with the happiness of the average Englishman of his time, let alone in arriving at any comprehensive concept

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of human felicity. Nonetheless, he deserves credit for warning his contemporaries about the hazards of universal democracy, at a time when it was quite fashionable to see this socio-political arrangement as a panacea for all our ills. Though higher pleasures are as vulnerable to reversal as visceral ones, Mill saw that the putative sovereignty of the "lower orders" posed a real threat to the kind of life he singled out as indispensible to the flowering of culture.

Where Mill's critique of the mass mentality was tied to his insistence on the preservation and perpetuation of a refined culture, Sören Kierkegaard's was rooted in his conviction that true salvation must always be difficult and rare. Kierkegaard's fierce attack on the leveling process in *The Present Age* grew out of his reaffirmation of New Testament Christianity as opposed to its diluted bourgeois by-product, Christendom. To him, the beliefs held by the majority of baptized Christians in the nineteenth century represented a travesty of the offense embodied in the Incarnation. If only a few are to be saved, the amelioration of the environment, whether through gradualism or revolution, will not significantly counteract the universal thrust of original sin. Accordingly, Kierkegaard addressed his writings to the exceptional individual who, unlike those in the Christian community of his day, was prepared to face the truth about himself. Virtually all subsequent diagnoses of the modern mass man have incorporated features of Mill's cerebral elitism and Kierkegaard's Spinoza-like insistence on an aristocracy of the spirit. "Man is what he eats," but only a few men are sufficiently cerebral or spiritual to skip meals when they are hungry, and only these rise above the masses.

Nietzsche did not try to become a Christian like Kierkegaard or a consistent radical utilitarian like Mill; nevertheless, in his contempt for the mass of mankind, the "herd" as he called it, he remains unsurpassed. Quite aside from his diatribes against socialists, democrats, and theists, Nietzsche consigned the majority of mankind to serve a few Overmen of unmistakable superiority and self-assurance. While his resentment of the herd is easily understandable as a psychological construct, if not always as a persuasive attack on Christianity, Nietzsche's characterization of the master morality completely defies precise definition. However, before he began to "philosophize with a hammer," he noted a diminution of vitality and spontaneity among his contemporaries which was to become one of the major themes of Ortega's thought. Ortega agrees with Nietzsche that philology and related exercises in theory divorced from concrete human concerns must prove destructive to our future aspirations. Ortega was not carried away by biological fantasies, but his pride, his aristocratic bearing, and his reverence for preeminent personalities like Einstein are Nietzschean in their contempt for mediocrity and overspecialization. Furthermore, a powerful adversary of conventionality, Nietzsche reenforced Ortega's predilection for exceptional acts and foresight.

Add to these notions of Marx and Engels, Mill, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche, Flaubert's hatred of shopkeepers and the mature Dostoevsky's repudiation of political radicals, and it is far from surprising that the elite in our century, notwithstanding the raised standards of living in the West, have not exactly opened their arms to the average specimens of society. Consistent with the fact that the term

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"masses" almost invariably cuts across socio-economic demarcations, Ortega in his *Revolt of the Masses* views the mass man as a psychological type appearing no less among physicians and artists than among resident managers, technocrats and unskilled workers.

The favorable reception of Ortega's book in the early thirties, then, must be ascribed not to the novelty of his central thesis, but to its peculiar relevance at a critical juncture in European history. The Great Leader of the Soviet peoples had embarked in their name upon the murder of millions of peasants. Hitler had mesmerized the majority of his countrymen with rhetorical flourishes oddly alien to the land of poets and thinkers. And Mussolini's Blackshirts sang the "Giovinezza," heedless of the humanists who had labored so long in the cradle of modern European culture. In Spain itself, which was particularly close to Ortega's heart, there loomed the figure of Franco, doubtless one of the last men on earth to suggest the rehumanization of *Homo sapiens*. Quite correctly, Ortega saw in these developments a monstrous threat to what remained of European civilization after the First World War and its frenetic aftermath. Spectacular progress in science and technology, far from helping to sustain moral values, was proving compatible with their erosion and perversion. In industrialized nations there was no lack of statistical proof of an unprecedented standard of living extending to many of the formerly deprived. Yet the quality of life was sinking abominably, like an independent variable cast off from its quantitative moorings. Ironically enough, in America the promise of a college education was still taken as an intimation of immortality despite Schopenhauer's warning that virtue and happiness could not be taught. It is hard to think of a book written in the last fifty years that was more propitiously launched and more ideally matched in terms of subject matter to the prevailing ambience than the *Revolt of the Masses*.

Ortega is sympathetically disposed to the success of the masses, especially over the past two centuries, in improving their material well-being. He dissociates himself from any theory of decadence which links creature comforts with spiritual atrophy. In contrast to such politically simple-minded poets as Eliot, Pound, and Yeats, who could find paradise only in the Middle Ages or in some cognate "fairyland forlorn," Ortega frankly admits that any contemporary willing to change places with an ancestor would be a fool. Men of letters may have been happier in less emancipated times when ignorance allowed the poet's imagination to soar unchecked into rarefied heights of allegory and anagoge, but this advantage scarcely offset the terrible suffering endured by ordinary humanity. The secularization of modern man through scientific revolutions, in short, does not affront Ortega, as it does so many other critics of twentieth-century life style.

> I think there can be no doubt about it; any past time, without exception, would give him the feeling of a restricted space in which he could not breathe. That is to say, the man of today feels that his life is more a life than any past one, or, to put it the other way about, the entirety of past time seems small to actual humanity. This intuition as regards present-day existence renders null by its stark clarity any consideration about decadence that is not very cautiously thought out.[1]

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At the same time, however, Ortega deplores the diffusion of the mass mentality in our society. Ortega defines this mentality as comprised of inertia, excessive self-satisfaction, and an unwillingness to accept any authority outside a narrow selfhood. According to him, most of us, like primitives in pristine nature, are content to project an uncritical attitude toward experience. But, in fact, our environment is anything but given. By taking it naively for granted, we betray a complex historical legacy. Not only do we lack a comprehensive culture, observes Ortega, but, with a few exceptions, we have no understanding of the principles governing the technological wonders of modern life, and thus complacently assume the desirability of all artifacts that do our bidding.

The accuracy of Ortega's profile of the mass man is difficult to assess, if only because the weaknesses he imputes to mass man have plagued mankind from time immemorial. Kierkegaard's attack on the complacency of Christians in Christendom was already implicit in the writings of St. Jerome. Jimmy Durante's saying, "Everybody gets into the act," is paraphrased by Stravinsky to the effect that today everybody feels himself qualified to judge the merits of a musical composition. On further reflection, however, it seems obvious that amateurs have always comprised the largest segment of any public. Similarly, while most of us lag behind seers and prophets in judging the signs of the times, isn't it asking too much to expect human nature in general to transcend the apathy of accommodation transmitted from generation to generation? It is one thing to fault Heidegger and the German universities for self-deception and opportunism in the face of National Socialism, quite another to lament an absence of intellectual leadership on the part of German functionaries and technicians. In this connection, note the striking similarity to the overwhelming majority of Soviet Academicians who have sided with their government in its most recent campaign against such dissidents as Sakahrov and Solzhenitsyn. Neitzsche's *Thoughts Out of Season* would have been superfluous in a United States or Europe open to innovative programs and spiritual rebirth. The excellences which Ortega contrasts with the mediocrities inherent in the mass mentality have always been in short supply. Were the revolt of the masses to cease, it is doubtful whether our technocrats and officials would become any more imaginative than their predecessors. Though Ortega does not emphasize this, the overpopulation of the earth may yet turn out to be the most destructive modern force to be locked in irreconcilable conflict with the maintenance of a genuine culture. "Mathematics for the millions" is not the only thing that is proving to be an illusion.

Although on the whole the Spanish thinker avoids romanticizing the past, his distaste for overspecialization leads him to praise the eighteenth century at the expense of our own: "The most immediate result of this *unbalanced* specialization has been that today, when there are more 'scientists' than ever, there are much less 'cultured' men than, for example, about 1750."[2] One wonders how Ortega arrived at this determination. After all, the task of becoming a cultured individual today is infinitely harder than it was in 1750. The recent expansion of information has been so enor-

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mous that only a handful of individuals can now assimilate, let alone integrate, the upshot of inquiries in diverse domains of knowledge.

There is a recurring confusion in Ortega's position between the value of comprehensive culture and the value of expertise; his ideal of the cultivated man is seriously at odds with the necessary fragmentation and complexity of modern knowledge. He cannot have it both ways. Either he must opt for the dilettante who responds superficially to the call of all arts and sciences or he must go along with the professional whose intelligent reflections are limited to a rigidly defined area of competence. After all, Einstein himself may well have been frustrated at trying to fix his refrigerator in Princeton.

Interestingly enough, it was in the year 1750 that Rousseau, in his *Discourse on the Moral Effects of the Arts and Sciences,* objected to the blind enthusiasts of the Enlightenment as barbarians at heart. Far from being able to find among his contemporaries Ortega's retrospective image of the cultivated man, Jean-Jacques bemoaned the fact that such a philosopher-king had not existed since the glorious days of Stoic virtue and *apatheia.*

Ortega's denunciation of twentieth-century culture also strikes a false note in the following crescendo:

> What I affirm is that there is no culture where there are no standards to which our fellow-men can have recourse. There is no culture where there are no principles of legality to which to appeal. There is no culture where there is no acceptance of certain final intellectual positions to which a dispute may be referred. There is no culture where economic relations are not subject to a regulating principle to protect interests involved. There is no culture where aesthetic controversy does not recognize the necessity of justifying the work of art.[3]

While it is undoubtedly true that a general breakdown of standards has occurred, it follows neither logically nor experientially that legality and economics have disappeared altogether. Moreover, the justification of works of art, like the justification of "works of love," has never been an easy or feasible task. Analytic philosophers are characteristically unhappy unless they can justify everything under the sun, but this does not alter the fact that beyond a certain point it is useless to look for further reasons. Though God be dead, not everything is permitted; though philosophical aesthetics are largely irrelevant, artists continue to create.

However, once due allowance is made for Ortega's sporadic flights of romantic fancy and for his indulgence in broad generalizations, his book continues to stand up remarkably well. The gist of his thesis is that in the twentieth century mediocrity encapsulated in mass culture reigns supreme and, as a corollary, that any set of values which departs from this accessible norm, especially in an esoteric direction, is frowned upon as culturally arrogant and socially remiss. The masses, Ortega emphasizes, are not generically lower class, but include the self-complacent from all walks of life: from the academic humanist who prostitutes his knowledge in the market place by endless chatter about abortion, discrimination, and drugs, to the or-

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dinary "nice guy" who regards himself as an authority on everyone's likes and dislikes. Today, millions of Americans, who do not mean what they say and cannot grasp the meaninglessness of their compulsive role-playing in every sphere of existence, corroborate Ortega's indictment of our civilization.

This is not to suggest that America is alone in having followed such a course, but the glamor and fascination of certain forms of pathological behavior currently prevailing in the New World have been less accentuated in the Old. In spite of the fact that the *Revolt of the Masses* was inspired by Ortega's firsthand knowledge of traditional European culture, a reevaluation of his point of view in terms of American realities appears singularly appropriate in the year 1973. For me, a directly perceived aspect of this experience which offers some germane insights into the mass mentality revolves around the great experiment in universal higher education which has gained momentum since World War II.

To follow Ortega's categories of analysis: quantitatively, there can be little doubt that the extension of educational opportunities to more and more people is proving beneficial and humane. Professional educators and sociologists rejoice in the fruits of upward mobility. An increasing number of young Americans from a wider spectrum of backgrounds can now look forward to "creative careers" in the rarefied atmosphere of the arts and sciences, thereby fulfilling the hopes of their parents and grandparents. Everywhere these days one hears talk about college, credits, courses, and graduate work; and the economical and political situation permitting, a new dispensation of *Geist* may legitimately be anticipated.

Qualitatively, however, broad aspects of this educational growth are discouraging. As anyone teaching can testify, a vast number of students are bored to tears with their studies. Many, lacking a constitutional bent for the life of the mind, are there because their parents want them to be or because a college education is thought of as a prerequisite to success in American life. They tend to feel that they are wasting their time learning either to analyze Wittgenstein, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, or "rapping" uninhibitedly about sexual equality and the mysteries of skiing and being. What really concerns these students is credit: academic credit to procure a degree as expeditiously as possible, and the financial credit it will make accessible to them when they face the problem of earning a living.

In addition to this cult of material success, the idolatry of immediate gratification transforms much of higher education into a perpetual farce. Drifting and widespread private disaffection among students cannot be imputed solely to their being overeducated for the available jobs, which they consider menial. It should be pointed out that these students, often driven into an academic environment by false expectations of the college experience, comprise collectively a paradigm case of Ortega's *Mass-Man* inadvertently enveloped in disillusionment. Whether victims of the idolatory of education or of the myth of "making it," such students are, for the most part, unconcerned with intellectual activity, unable to grasp its importance for them, and indifferent to its historical roots.

Alas, this syndrome is scarcely confined to students. In their frustration at trying to deal with a disenchanted and sometimes even hostile student body, faculty

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members develop a passion for identification with the young, like that of the old man on board the boat from Trieste to Venice in Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*. Emulating the silliness of those whom he likes to refer to as his co-workers, many a faculty member today tends to resemble a twisted image of his charges. In order to accommodate himself to the fads of his students and to conceal a disillusionment with his initial professional commitment, he is prepared to sacrifice all standards of scholarship and teaching for the sake of gaining the widest possible popularity. He comes to see grades as obsolete, lectures as academic, traditional problems as dead by definition, and excellence of performance as irrelevant to the poor in their quest for equality. From this it follows that students know as much as their instructors, that every conceivable topic is worthy of being discussed in the classroom, and that the improvement of the greatest fool, like the corrigibility of the greatest sinner, can only be questioned by the most hardened reactionary. In the end, according to such reasoning, faculty and students are transformed into a single happy family, discoursing together on all subjects without privilege or special competence. This dilution of knowledge is further exacerbated by the fact that so many who profess it exemplify the mass mentality. Many individuals now teaching are attracted to the academy by questionable motives not too dissimilar from those which attract the mass of students. Were they educated bourgeoisie they would at least have the grace to laugh at themselves from time to time and to recall how in previous centuries antics similar to their own were caricatured without mercy. Often basically uncultivated and devoid of historical perspective, they sincerely confuse their folly with innovative programs and original ideas. Thus they reinforce Ortega's paradoxical critique of *Mass-Man* as being at once deficient in comprehensive culture and without competence in any special branch of knowledge.

Not only in American higher education, but in American life as a whole, the leveling tendencies which are the focal point of Ortega's analysis continue to play such a vigorous role that his critique, with all its defects, retains its existential relevance. Unlike David Riesman who argues in *The Lonely Crowd* that we suffer from excessive "outer-directedness," Ortega, it seems to me, hits the nail on the head when he diagnoses our ills as above all the products of towering and misappropriated self-love divorced from reverence for what over the centuries has proven best for life and thought. What is the use of being "inner-directed," if the authority of the self rests on fads and delusions? Preparedness for the future presupposes a genuine appropriation and appreciation of the past.

When the *Revolt of the Masses* first appeared, Ortega was frequently taken to task for displaying pre-Fascist tendencies which the critics linked to his elitist biases. Rereading his book today, I feel that the substance of his argument completely supersedes whatever objectionable prejudices he may have held. In this connection, it should be reiterated that such Fascist leaders as Franco and Hitler, when they actually came to power in Europe, radically repudiated the core of Ortega's plea for the rehumanization of every area of man's endeavor.

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Moreover, an amazing number of his predictions have come true. Somewhere he characteristically remarks that in the foreseeable future millions of people will be crossing the Atlantic on a regular basis and that, while this experience will undoubtedly prove beneficial in many respects, it will, at the same time, diminish the quality of travel abroad. While the beauties of the European landscape have remained basically intact, anyone of discrimination who has spent a recent summer on the Continent must have been appalled by the deterioration of the terrain brought about by the sheer numbers of visitors. The distance that separates the Salzburg of Hugo von Hofmannsthal from the Salzburg of today embodies the sad truths of Ortega's argument.

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EDWARD SHILS

Ideology and Utopia by Karl Mannheim

KARL MANNHEIM was extraordinarily sensitive to his national and continental environment and to his own time. He read widely; he had a lively curiosity and a quickly moving imagination which enabled him to respond to many kinds of events. From 1914 until his death in 1947 at the age of fifty-four he had only about a decade of relative calm: 1925 to 1929 in Germany and 1933 to 1939 in Great Britain. The rest of his adult life was spent in the midst of war, revolution, and uncivil commotion. A sociologist of such a sensitive imagination could not have avoided perceiving these unrelenting and pitiless conflicts and making them into a theme of central importance in his thought.

Ideologie und Utopie[1] was published in 1929 when disorder began once more in the Weimar republic. In 1931, when disorder was at its height, he published an article entitled "*Wissenssoziologie*" in a German encyclopedia of sociology.[2] In 1935, very shortly after his settlement in England, he wrote a long essay which attempted to place the two former writings in the wider setting of the plurality of intellectual outlooks which had developed in Europe since the Reformation, to assimilate his new interest in psychoanalysis into his earlier Hegelian, Marxian and Weberian sociology, and to find a way out of the relativism in which he was entrapped and most ill-at-ease. In 1936, all three of these writings were published in English translation.[3] The long essay formed the introductory chapter, the three chapters of *Ideologie und Utopie* followed, and the encyclopedia article constituted the concluding chapter. The result was a book which, full of the contradictions and uncertainties of Mannheim's thought, was an adequate expression of his tentacularly rich and sympathetic mind.

For better or for worse, Mannheim was, in his intellectual disposition, a thoroughgoing sociologist. He had a profound distaste for individualism; he believed not only that the individual was a frail reed but that he scarcely existed as a thinking

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reed. Mannheim began his intellectual career at the end of the First World War under the powerful influence of the Hegelian conception of the objective spirit. As a Hegelian, he was also a historicist. He believed that every society and epoch had its own intellectual culture, of which every single work produced in it was a part. In this imposing medium the individual mind and its works were only instances of the "objective spirit" or culture into which they were born. The individual's mind, the individual's imagination, the individual's power of reason and observation were only fictions. The idealistic tradition attributed primary reality to the trans-individual complex of ideas; the individual was no more than a creature of this trans-individual reality. The properties of the individual could be derived from this reality; the individual imposed and added little or nothing to it. The movement of this cosmos of symbols through history bore no trace of the individual's mental powers.

Yet even this view was not wholly acceptable to Mannheim. Although it denied the power of the individual it still accorded too much autonomy to the realm of the mind, even to the collective mind, to a realm of ideas possessing an inner, self-developing dynamic force of its own. Marxism offered Mannheim the intellectual opportunity to escape from idealism because it had so much in common with idealism. Marxism too was historicist; it too was holistic; it too denied the primacy of the individual. But unlike idealism, it denied the primacy of the intellectual sphere. It refused to accept the idealistic view that ideas—the realm of symbols—have an internal force of their own which presses them to develop in a direction which is inherent in them. It was this anti-intellectualism which led Mannheim to add Marxism to his intellectual parentage.

I think that Mannheim was never an avowed Marxist. He was generally sympathetic with socialistic ideas but he never, as far as I know, associated himself publicly with the Social Democratic Party in Germany even though many of his friends and close associates did. He took pains to distinguish himself from Marxism but he never concealed his appreciation of it. Whereas he often spoke disparagingly of idealism, he did not speak in the same way of Marxism. Yet he wanted to go deeper than Marxism seemed capable of going.

Nonetheless, Mannheim never succeeded in emancipating himself either from Marxism or from idealism. The Marxian influence was dominant in his fundamental belief in the primacy of the nonintellectual stratum of being and in the peripheral significance of intellectual activity. The sociology of knowledge was intended to go beyond Marxism. Although he regarded it as a mark of superiority of the sociology of knowledge that it regarded "not merely classes, as a dogmatic type of Marxism would have it," as the determinant of "thought-models" but went beyond Marxism to include "generations, states, groups, sects, occupational groups, schools, etc.," he immediately went on to say:

> We do not intend to deny that of all the above-mentioned social groupings and units, class stratification is the most significant, since in the final analysis all the other social groups arise from and are transformed as parts of the more basic conditions of production and domination.[4]

To his undivested idealism and Marxism, he added, in the early 1930's, a very

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generalized admixture of psychoanalysis. To the power of culture and "social" or "existential position," he joined, in the early 1930's, the "collective unconscious" as one more counteragent to the autonomy of the observing, imagining and reasoning mind.

II

The upshot of these powerful influences was the "sociology of knowledge" and the closely associated critique of objectivity. The sociology of knowledge was intended to be a study of the dependence of outlooks, theories, doctrines etc. on the "social position of the knower." It was intended to demonstrate that whatever human beings believe they know about the world is dependent on their circumstances and fortunes in society; their knowledge and beliefs are, according to the sociology of knowledge, overpoweringly bound by the outlook which they have inherited and by the force of their social position. Mannheim never defined "social position" any more than he defined the "existential connectedness" of knowledge (*Seinsverbundenheit des Wissens*) but his intention was clear: thought was always a creature of social circumstance, never the creator of thought or social circumstance. Inherited outlooks were adduced to show the limited power of the individual mind, never to show the limits of the powers of social or class position.

He went to great exertions to distinguish the sociology of knowledge from the "theory of ideology." The latter did no more than attribute error to deliberate deception, falsification, masking, and self-blinding; in its way, the "theory of ideology" left intact the fundamental capacities of the individual mind and this was not reconcilable with Mannheim's idealistic, historicist, and environmentalist postulates. According to Mannheim, the theory of ideology left the epistemological foundations of empiricism intact; it assumed that men possessed the powers to discern the truth but failed to do so intentionally because they anticipated advantages from avoiding the acknowledgment of the truth. The theory of ideology postulated the existence of an apparatus of perception and reasoning common to human beings; the failure of this apparatus to bring forth identical results in everyone was attributable to "mistakes" and to the power of passions and interests which diverted this apparatus from its proper operation. Still, the potentialities were there in the individual.

The sociology of knowledge, however, according to Mannheim, worked at the deeper levels of the mind. In accordance with the historicist idealistic tradition, the diversity of beliefs which men have about themselves, their societies, and the world are accounted for by the diversity of the conceptual or categorical apparatus which they bring to bear on the "facts." (Facts always troubled Mannheim methodologically and he expressed his uneasiness by quotation marks.) Among various epochs, classes, etc., these conceptual or categorical apparatuses are incomparably and even unassimilably different from each other; their distinctiveness extends to conceptions of causation and time, criteria of valid evidence, models of explanation, etc. These distinctive apparatuses are different from each other because of the different social

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situations, social positions, existential conditions, life situations, etc., in which the individual carriers of these apparatuses live. The discovery of these affinities between the outlooks and the social situations and the derivation of the former from the latter are the tasks of the sociology of knowledge.

One sees straightaway how persistent was the power of Marxism over Mannheim's thought even when he thought he had transcended it. The weaknesses of this sort in the sociology of knowledge were the same as those of the Marxian sociology of knowledge. They were first, the assertion without evidence of correlations between vaguely defined independent and equally vaguely defined dependent variables without any plausible theoretical linkages between the two to compensate for the absence of empirical evidence; and second, the reduction of intellectual activities to an epiphenomenal status.

As a result of the first weakness, the sociology of knowledge never became established as a productive part of sociology. The subject was doomed to remain at the point of programs and prolegomena but it produced no results. There were of course other reasons. Most sociologists of the generation immediately after Mannheim lacked the sophisticated knowledge of intellectual history needed to undertake satisfactory work in the field and, if they had possessed such sophistication, the undertaking would in time have appeared unfeasible to them. Since it is a denial of the constitution of intellectual activity to regard such activity as having no character other than that imposed on it by the social situation of those engaged in it, serious sociologists who began it in good faith would surely have seen through it. How could one study any object and try to discover the truth about it if, from the very beginning, one was convinced that one's conclusions were inevitably determined not by the application of criteria of truth to carefully observed evidence but rather by one's own social circumstances, such as class position? In its Mannheimian form the sociology of knowledge was doomed to discredit but Mannheim's failure even to provide models of the theoretical linkage meant that it never reached the stage of undergoing the saving revision which systematic research might have provided. The result was therefore a stillbirth.

Curiosity and imagination, observational and reasoning power, learning and systematic study in the form of observation, erudition, or experiment had no place in Mannheim's sociology of knowledge. Nothing new could be said by the performers of intellectual activities studied by the sociology of knowledge. All they could do was to respond to their life situations in ways which did not call upon their individual intellectual powers. Any appearance of individuality in an intellectual work was nothing more than a result of a variation or idiosyncrasy of the social position or situation of the intellectual actor.

So eager was Mannheim to protect the view that intellectual action had no autonomous power that it was sufficient for him to find one trait which he could assert to be dependent on the social position of the intellectual actor for him to assume triumphantly that all the rest of the intellectual actor's work was equally dependent on that situation. If it could be shown, or at least asserted with a show of plausibility, that a problem had been formulated in response to a newly emergent and practically

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significant situation, then Mannheim regarded that as evidence that the entire intellectual undertaking—the analysis of the problem, the hypothesis formulated to render it, the mode of gathering evidence, and the conclusion—was determined by the "existential condition of the knower."

There was something in what Mannheim said but it was much less and much different from what he thought. His insistent dislike of idealism made it impossible for him to acknowledge in principle that intellectual traditions are significant, although by no means exclusive, determinants of intellectual action; it was his dislike of the immanent interpretation of the history of intellectual works—nowadays called "internalist"—which drew him into the sociological—or "externalist"—camp. He remained there until he ceased to concern himself with the sociology of knowledge; the appearance of the English version, *Ideology and Utopia,* marked his departure from the subject.

His espousal of a historicist Marxian variant of a sociological approach, his desire to escape from idealism, and his dislike of individualism were, in combination, an insuperable hindrance to the development of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge. These commitments prevented him from admitting in principle that the cognitive powers of human beings have in some historically very important cases an autonomous motivation and a constitutive set of properties which operate in all societies and in all epochs; he provided no place for the fact that human beings possess curiosity and imagination and reasoning and observational powers, and that the results of these are precipitated into works which are then crystallized into traditions. He failed to acknowledge in his theory that intellectual traditions have real influence on subsequent intellectual works—although in his own explanations he repeatedly invoked intellectual traditions as *ad hoc* explanations—and that intellectual traditions change and grow, and that they do so when the human beings who come under their influence are impelled by practical desire or intellectual propensity to deal with problems which have not been adequately dealt with by the tradition in its hitherto accepted form.

His sociology of knowledge remained more Marxist than it need have and than was good for it. It is not that the Marxian view of the determination of intellectual actions and works by class position is wholly wrong or utterly irrelevant. But it covers only a very small part of the phenomenon and it does that very crudely. Although Mannheim sometimes suggested in passing that institutional structures and roles other than class were of importance, he regarded them as really secondary or inconsequential. He had little sense for the social institutional processes which are directly involved in the transmission, establishment, and acceptance of knowledge. Although he wrote an interesting essay on the role of competition in the intellectual sphere, he had little understanding for the competition of ideas and the processes of selection through which some find acceptance and others are relegated to obscurity or oblivion. Competition was for him "a representative case in which extra-theoretical processes affect the emergence and the direction of the development of knowledge," but he interpreted that to mean that "diverse interpretations of the world. . . . when their social background is uncovered, reveal themselves as the in-

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tellectual expressions of conflicting groups struggling for power."[5] He did not mean intellectuals struggling for the acceptance of their ideas or works; he meant non-intellectuals struggling for power over society. He never tried to disclose the mechanisms by which these political and economic conflicts are transferred into the competition of interpretations of the world. Had he tried, he might have discovered that he was on the wrong track.[6] Alternatively, had he worked backwards from the competition of interpretations in specific instances, he might have contributed to the development of a sociology of knowledge which showed a realistic awareness of the fact that knowledge is an independent value and possesses a type of reality which the Marxian theory in its usual form could not accommodate.

In this connection it may be noted that although Mannheim often used the pragmatist or instrumentalist idiom in accordance with which "a theory is wrong if in a given practical situation it uses concepts and categories which, if taken seriously, would prevent man from adjusting himself at that historical stage,"[7] he found no place for the investigation of the role of the cognitive element in action or of the influence of natural and social science in society. He did not do so because, having to his own satisfaction got rid of his idealistic old man of the sea, he went to the opposite extreme of denying the dignity and partial autonomy of the sphere of cultural things, including scientific knowledge and the other symbolic constructions of the imaginative and rational powers of the human mind.

III

This derogatory attitude toward knowledge found a fitting expression in Mannheim's relativism. Now, whereas moral relativism seems utterly self-evident to the intellectual stratum in its present state of mind, although its members are not at all reluctant to act as dogmatic moral preachers to the whole human race, cognitive relativism is another matter. Those who shirk the acquisition of knowledge might find a congenial self-justification in cognitive relativism, but not those who seek to acquire knowledge. Mannheim was an honest and serious man and he wanted his assertions to be believed because of their truthfulness and not because they were connected with his existential position and that of his audience. He was in fact profoundly embarrassed by the difficulty into which he was brought by his relativism. He tried to find various ways out. One was through the conception of a "freely floating intelligentsia" which by virtue of its detachment from partisanship could construct a synthesis of the partial views attained from partisan positions. He did not follow this up although it had possibilities of fruitfulness; I surmise that he did not do so because it was contradictory to his dominant beliefs about the ineluctible pervasiveness of the extra-intellectual determinants of knowledge. The other alternative he sought was "relationism," a proposition which he left extremely ambiguous and hence compatible both with the relativism of which he unwillingly saw the defects and with the "objectivism" which his "sociologistic" prejudice rendered unacceptable to him.

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IV

All this notwithstanding, *Ideology and Utopia* has remained continuously in print in the United Sates and Great Britain for nearly forty years. In recent years, it has found admirers among the newer breed of misologists, and there is no doubt that in his vague and portentious declarations there can be found authority, couched in the somber tones of a German intellectual of his time, for disparaging the whole enterprise of science and learning.

Yet that alone does not quite exhaust the grounds of his persistent appeal. Perhaps they lie in the gravity of his mood, in his large epochal perspective, and in the impression which he always gave in his personal bearing and in the overtones of his writings that, despite the repeated assertions to the contrary in those writings, the quest for truthful understanding is one of the grandest and worthiest activities in which human beings can engage in this life. It is a great pity that he spent a substantial part of his too short life arguing for a hopelessly wrong position which his own demeanor refuted.

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3. Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1936).
4. Ibid., pp. 247–248.
5. Ibid., p. 241.
6. There was a dogmatic streak in Mannheim's beliefs which led him to make assertions like the following: ". . . fundamental philosophical differences" to which "pure theoretical differences . . . [may] be reduced" "are . . . invisibly guided by the antagonism and competition between concrete conflicting groups." Mannheim felt no obligation to render visible the "invisible"; he simply posited and accepted its existence.
7. Mannheim, *Ideology*, p. 85.

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TALCOTT PARSONS

The Interpretation of Dreams by Sigmund Freud

FREUD'S *The Interpretation of Dreams* seems particularly appropriate for discussion in the present issue of *Dædalus* because it was first published in the opening year of the twentieth century, 1900, when Freud was forty-four years old. It was the first major publication of what came to be known as psychoanalytic theory. This field, if not his unique creation, is overwhelmingly dominated by the figure of Freud. The main outline of psychoanalytic theory is clearly present in *The Interpretation of Dreams* and, indeed, in a surprisingly subtle and fully developed form. In preparation for writing the present article, I entirely reread the book in its seventh German edition, since I had not read it for a good many years.[1] I was more profoundly impressed by it than I was originally, essentially because, on the one hand, I have a much better understanding of psychoanalytic thinking than I did, and secondly, because I now connect Freud's book with a great many theoretical preoccupations of my own which have undergone very substantial development since I first read Freud.

In a great many respects this is a unique book. Although there was a rather extensive literature on dreams in his day, which Freud meticulously reviews in his first chapter, there was surely nothing of a scope and depth comparable to his interpretations. Another unusual aspect of this book is the fact that, as Freud himself points out, many of the theoretical problems it deals with are adaptations of the problems he had encountered in trying to understand his own field of the psychoneuroses over a series of years before writing it. So far as we know, Freud himself was not in any gross or obvious sense a neurotic. Through a variety of channels—notably through his recognition of the phenomenon called *transference*—he became increasingly aware that a person who attempts to treat the

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neuroses of others through the psychoanalytic procedure must first acquire a very unusual knowledge of himself. This requirement has, within the psychoanalytic movement, been institutionalized in the didactic analysis which is a primary condition to admission to psychoanalytic practice. Freud was the only psychoanalyst, however, who ever carried out the procedure of psychoanalysis on himself. Among its other features, *The Interpretation of Dreams* is the primary documentation of this self-analysis.

The Interpretation of Dreams contains, as far as I know, Freud's first published statement about the Oedipus complex, which was to figure so very prominently in his general theory. It is, I think, highly significant that Freud's father died in 1896, four years prior to the publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams*.[2] Painful and disturbing as it was at the time, there is reason to believe that the death of his father had the long-run effect of freeing Freud from a good many of the inhibitions that had impeded his work of self-analysis. In the book, he recounts and analyzes a considerable number of his own dreams, as well as those recounted to him by his patients then subjected to analysis in the course of a therapeutic program. He also draws, though not so heavily, on dreams from the more general literature.

One might ask why Freud chose, as the primary subject matter of his first major theoretical work in psychoanalysis, the study of dreams rather than the direct study of neurotic symptoms and the conditions of their resolution through therapy. Part of the answer lies in his conviction concerning the importance of his self-analysis for the furtherance of his work. Through his psychiatric practice, he had come to realize that neurotic symptoms were very generally connected with dreams. Since he was personally, for the most part, free of neurotic symptoms, dreams provided a particularly appropriate vehicle for his self-analysis. At the same time, he surely realized that in the history of science, indirect attacks on fundamental theoretical problems have frequently proven more fruitful than direct ones. In addition, as a responsible physician, Freud may have considered the very fact that the study of dreams was at one remove from the focus of his clinical responsibilities as an argument in its favor since it enabled him to concentrate on psychological problems as such, rather than on the balancing of therapeutic successes and failures.

The Nature of Psychoanalytic Theory

There can be no doubt about the tremendous impact of psychoanalytic theory on the culture of the twentieth century, nor about Freud's preponderant creative role in establishing it as part of our culture. The big main outline of the conceptual scheme was already quite fully developed in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, although Freud was clearly not a man to rest content at one stage in the development of his thinking. On the contrary, through the rest of his long life—he died in 1939—he never ceased to extend and modify his theories. He did not, however, turn aside to any radically different line of thinking, and there is a fundamental continuity between *The Interpretation of Dreams* and all of his subsequent writings.

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It is often said that Freud's greatest discovery was that of the Unconscious. Seen in the proper perspective, I think this is correct. In more general terms, his great achievement was to have worked out, with considerably greater theoretical sophistication than his predecessors, an account of the structure and functioning of the human person as a psychological entity operating as a self-regulating system. In the formulation of this scheme, the Unconscious was already, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, one of three subsystems in his total psychological system, the other two being the Conscious system and the Preconscious system. Many years later, he modified this tripartite division slightly, calling the new subsystems the Id, the Ego and the Superego, but the continuity between the two formulations is patent.

Freud's discourse throughout the book deals with the *meaning* of psychic events—meaning, that is, in some kind of subjective rereferable sense, rather than simply as an index of somatic processes. Thus he decisively repudiates any form of somatic reductionism. Freud's concept of the Unconscious is built primarily around his concept of psychic energy, in German, *Triebe*, usually mistranslated into English as "instinctual." This energy is basically a common pool, not irrevocably attached to particular objects of "desire." It is transferable through various processes, one of the most important of which is called, in psychoanalytic vocabulary, *displacement*, or, in later statements, *cathexis*. The tendency of this psychic energy source is unidirectional, tending always toward the achievement of states of gratification. This is the focus of the concept, *wish*, which figures so prominently in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, especially in Freud's dictum that a wish-fulfillment component is present in every dream and, in fact, provides the motive force for dream activity.

Freud attributes the property of *unconsciousness* to things which are not remembered because they are protected by certain mechanisms from gaining access to the conscious components of the personality. The Unconscious is clearly, in his view, not a competely fluid pool, but one distributed in relation to what might be called the unconscious cathexis of a system of objects. Freud adheres rigorously to the psychic character of the Unconscious and strongly emphasizes the importance of childhood experience. My rereading of the book has reinforced my conviction[3] that its primary structure at the object level is the internalized object system of childhood experience, which is, of course, very heavily affected by the social structure of the human family. This is closely connected with Freud's own emphasis on the sexual—or better, perhaps, erotic—component in the motivation of unconscious wishes. In the development of the individual, this has roots in the very special role played by eroticism in childhood, eroticism connected primarily with the child's motivational attachment to human objects in his environment, but transferable to nonhuman objects such as animals and indeed physical objects. Freud's contribution to the understanding of the eroticism of childhood is crucial. Fellow members of the child's family are clearly the most important of these objects, followed by nonfamilial household members. Central to Freud's analysis is the significance of these objects as potential sources of pleasure or fulfillment gratification, and of the blocking of such gratifications. This is the main axis of the famous Freudian concepts of *pleasure* and *unpleasure*. The arousal of an impulse or desire always induces unpleasurable

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feelings, but in the process of gratification the unpleasure is converted into pleasure; when the cycle is complete, however, with full consummation, the whole *affective tone*, as he calls it, disappears.

In his remarkable final chapter, Freud speaks of the Unconscious as tending to maintain a rather stable equilibrium of energy potential and allocation. Only in rather carefully regulated ways and in relatively small doses is its underlying energy released into the Preconscious and the Conscious sectors of the personality. It can be released through dreams, or through what later came to be called *ego-activity*, or through pathological symptoms. It is important to realize that there is a cognitive component in the structure of the Unconscious.[4] Objects on the one hand, and wishes on the other, clearly fit into the paradigm of goal-orientation, a paradigm familiar in the sciences of human action and behavior and in biology as well. The processes of the Unconscious, however, are not primarily those of cognitive reasoning; rather, they are what Freud calls *affective processes*, essentially those which deal with the "investment of psychic energy" in wishes and the objects through which they can be gratified, and the reallocation of such energy within systems of objects. The relevant system of objects extends past the boundaries of the Unconscious into the Preconscious and eventually into the Conscious subsystems.

The endowment of an object with psychic energy is what has come to be known as *cathexis* (German *Besetzung*). Freud's term for the paths by which energy is transmitted from one object to another is *association*. This kind of association—quite different from the processes of logical inference in conscious thinking and reasoning—connects objects with primarily affective meanings according to their symbolic properties. These may be either resemblances or contrasts, and actual reversal is a very common phenomenon in dream processes. Freud is insistent on the difference between what he ends up calling the *primary* process of the Unconscious and the *secondary* process of the Conscious world. One of his most important propositions in *The Interpretation of Dreams* is that the objects which enter the manifest content of actual dreams should be regarded as the nodes where several complex association paths intersect. By these association paths the dream content is related in turn to the latent "dream thoughts" which he contends are predominantly of preconscious origin—though some are actually conscious, notably references to the previous day's experiences. The main task of dream interpretation is tracing out these paths of association to significant objects and events.

The principles of organization of the Unconscious and the Conscious sectors of the personality are radically different. I think that it is because of this difference that Freud holds that unregulated interchange and interpenetration between them cannot fail to be disorganizing on both sides of the boundary. Since Freud's own approach as therapist and analyst of dreams had necessarily been from the point of view of the consciousness system, he was particularly impressed by the functioning of agencies which prevented components of the Unconscious from crossing the boundaries to the Conscious and vice versa in an unregulated manner. First he formulated the concept of an agency which he called the *censor*, which essentially prevented boundary crossings from the Unconscious to the Conscious, then he

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developed the concept into what he called *repression*. Especially in the field of pathological symptom formation, he was greatly impressed by the amount of conflict which could be generated in this area of boundary relationships. He seems to have felt, however, that, in the relatively integrated and mentally healthy adult personality, the elements of conflict could at least be minimized to the point where they were tolerable. In the dream, he clearly saw a kind of safety valve which, under the protection of sleep, permitted expression of unconscious wishes and thus a kind of gratification of them which would result in minimal disturbances to the conscious life. It is important to realize that there are direct parallels here to the process of psychoanalytic therapy. In the analytic relation the therapist encourages the verbal expression of any and all thoughts, deliberately seeking to stimulate the expression of those which belong primarily in the Unconscious. There is, however, a fundamental distinction in psychoanalytic procedure between verbal expression on the one hand and what is called "acting out" on the other. Thus, to use a familiar example, if a patient has displaced his hostility toward his father onto his analyst, he may express his hostility verbally in very bitter terms without its leading to retaliation. However, a physical attack on the analyst is strictly forbidden and would be promptly suppressed. Sleep seems to provide an analogous situation in that, motor activity having been suspended by sleep, the acting out of dream wishes is precluded.

The Integration of Psychoanalytic Theory in the Sciences Dealing with Living Systems

It is not clear to me how far Freud was aware of the similarity of the theory of the human psyche he developed in *The Interpretation of Dreams* and the parallels which have just been sketched to certain more general movements in the theoretical analysis of living systems, both organic and human, at the psychological, social, and cultural levels. It strikes me quite forcibly that there is an important parallel between Freud's conception of the Unconscious as a relatively stabilized and rather tightly controlled system and the conception of the internal environment of the organism developed in physiology, especially by Freud's contemporary Claude Bernard and Bernard's successor Walter B. Cannon. The forces and mechanisms are different but the main theoretical format is strikingly similar. Both are subsystems which, because of their effective insulation in certain fundamental respects from fluctuations in the environment, are able to maintain a higher level of constancy than free interchange with the environment would permit.

Such a parallel throws light on the sharp differences which Freud himself emphasizes between primary and secondary processes—processes which he connects directly with affective process and cognitive process respectively. The cognitive function organizes a set of mechanisms which enhance the individual's chances of coping successfully with the contingencies—dangers as well as the opportunities—inherent

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in the environment external to his own personality. Though the psychic components of the environment and the internal system may in certain respects be the same, their combinations are quite different. The components we associate with such conceptions as rationality and reasoning are far more prominent in relation to the environment than they are to the internal system.

This is only one of a number of similarities which suggest themselves between Freud's analytical schemes and those developed in a variety of neighboring disciplines. Somewhat similar theoretical constructs have appeared in the fields dealing with human societies and cultures. Particularly prominent beginnings are found in the work of Emile Durkheim, who sees society as a "reality sui generis," functioning as the internal environment of a general system of human action.[5]

Conclusion

Psychoanalytic theory has, of course, been highly controversial ever since its first massive promulgation through *The Interpretation of Dreams.* Indeed, it is still drastically repudiated in some quarters. There can be little doubt, however, that it has been one of the most important intellectual movements of the century. It is my own view that, far more than is generally realized, it is in accord with the main movement of science, extending all the way from sciences on the biological side and psychology to those dealing with human phenomena at the social and cultural levels. In tackling the task of systematically analyzing the individual human personality, Freud stood at a particularly crucial nodal point in this larger intellectual movement. He made advances in theoretical penetration, comprehensiveness, and clarity far beyond the points reached by any of his predecessors. Certainly I regard *The Interpretation of Dreams* as one of the great landmarks in the intellectual development of the twentieth century.

References

1. My rereading was done, as I noted, in the 7th German edition (Wien: Franz Deuticke, 1945).
2. Freud's relation to Wilhelm Fliess was particularly important to Freud. On this and the whole background of Freud's life, see the monumental biography in three volumes by his close English associate and friend Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (New York: Basic Books, 1953, 1955, 1957). The relation to Fliess is discussed in Vol. I, ch. 13.
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ROBERT COLES

The Nature and Destiny of Man by Reinhold Niebuhr

THIS CENTURY IS OFTEN said to be dominated by the ideas of two men: Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. Certainly at least some of Marx's words are repeated—and fought over too—by those who run the world's largest nation and the world's most populous nation. As for Freud, Auden's estimate in his memorial poem—"He has become a whole climate of opinion"—still very much holds, at least among the West's so-called intelligentsia.

Marx lived and died in the nineteenth century, a lonely, somewhat tormented, and very much ignored man. No doubt confident capitalists never heard of him. Tories and Whigs, liberals and conservatives in various countries had better things to do than pay him heed. Meliorists of various persuasions knew that there were wrongs to right, but were not about to locate themselves in some grand historical scheme of things as Marx would have them do, and thereby acknowledge how limited, if not doomed, their own assumptions were. So Marx was buried in London, poor, and relatively unknown—a man respected by eccentric agitators, anarchists and outcasts of various kinds. Important people wanted to seize history's opportunities, not to examine history in such a way that the ground under them would come to seem unreliable indeed.

Freud followed Marx; nevertheless, he lived more than half his life in the nineteenth century, developed the heart of his psychoanalytic theory in the 1890's, and published his masterpiece, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in 1900, at a time when Europe seemed deceptively at peace with itself and Queen Victoria had yet to die. He, too, was ignored for years, if not reviled. His fellow psychologists and psychiatrists, not unlike those who ran governments or expressed the conventional wisdom wanted by their age, were full of manipulative hopes and expectations: jolt the person, get a trance going, try a spa and its waters, urge and exhort and demand

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and contrive and conjure, so that somehow the mind would respond and the person recover, all of which meant become a proper bourgeois—reliable, predictable, conventional, respectable. Who of any significance in the late nineteenth century or its spillage, the early years of the twentieth, was prepared to see that every one of us is driven by early childhood experiences we have largely forgotten—driven to a degree that our lives are endlessly consecrated, it might be said, along certain lines we ourselves only glimpse in dreams, or yes, in moments of unrest when our carefully protected and defended "ignorance" no longer works to keep us "normal" and hence untroubled by that bothersome introspection which, let loose, begins to question everyone and everything? Freud, like Marx, was a bothersome brooder, intent on coming up with moody and grim portrayals of struggle and conflict seemingly built into the individual's history, even as other conflicts and struggles have never stopped being a part of the world's history. Why bother with the vision of a Marx or a Freud, when there were factories to build, railroad systems to lay down, empires to acquire? Man's nature was to acquire, and in so doing he was fulfilled: his life became more predictable, more comfortable, less a matter of jeopardy and more jeopardy. Man's destiny was to prove himself capable, at last, of finding a New Jerusalem, maybe not the one forecast in the Bible (piety if not faith required at least some humility) but something men had once scarcely imagined: unparalleled power to do things, undreamed of mastery over obstacles simply taken for granted as inevitable by those who had lived in other centuries.

Soon enough the first World War would mark the end of the nineteenth century. Karl Marx would be pulled out of history to appear on placards and flags in Moscow. His words became the faith of one nation, then of many nations. His books became sources of revelation; his view of history a creed. Even the capitalist West could not escape him. The fierce opposition to his way of looking at things became recognition in itself: socialism and communism may or may not be the waves of the future, but certainly they dominate the world as alternatives to be upheld or scorned.

All the while, in the 1920's and early 1930's, Freud's "weltanschauung," as he once called it, was beginning to seize the imagination of the upper middle class in America and Europe. Here was another revolution with a promise of another kind of freedom: at long last something approximating "free will," the result of rational inquiry made possible by a whole new way of looking inward. Nor was Freud completely shy about the "promise" psychoanalysis offered the world. He had his skeptical, pessimistic side, but he was also quite able to hope—especially in his New Introductory Lectures—for a world in which thousands upon thousands of psychoanalyzed men and women would be better human beings than any previous century had known. Not for them the hatred, greed, spite, envy and malice that others possess in such large measure, blindly driven as they are by unconscious "drives" and childhood "complexes" which retain, seemingly, a momentum of their own to the very end. At last they would really be able to know themselves, and thereby banish the demons which, even among those not hard pressed socially or economically, make for so much unhappiness among men, women and children.

If there were many to whom Marx and Freud offered a promise that there was at

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least a fighting chance that man's outer and inner worlds alike might be radically changed for the better, there were others who found in the writings of these two bold thinkers a sectarian, messianic faith. The result was dogmatism, self-righteousness, ideological rigidity, and finally, a kind of persecutory malevolence toward those who for one reason or another dissented—all justified in the name of some "goal" that the future promised. One kind of Marxist fought with another, never mind with the capitalist enemy. Freud's heirs fought, too; there were disedifying arguments, *ad hominem* allegations, and a number of schisms. Still, by the thousands, people became converted: some mixture of socialist politics and psychoanalytic experience ("applied" to the rearing and education of children as well as to adults) promised to put an end to just about everything that ailed the world—economic exploitation, wars and more wars, and the individual lusts and aggression which many believed were the bases for that exploitation and those wars. Let the ignorant, the illusion riddled, the naive and "infantile" persist in praying to God for forgiveness and mercy; modern, scientific man, armed with insights hitherto unavailable, would build a New Jerusalem now, right here, and without any divine help.

The churches, Catholic or Protestant, faced with such a challenge, were hardly the adversaries they once were. By the second decade of this century, it was apparent that the Catholic Church had lost its grip on millions of workers, even as the intellectuals of the West had in large measure moved further and further away from their last token allegiance. As for Protestantism, it was so diffuse, so often merely pietistic. In America, especially, Main Street had absorbed Christ; not only were the churches there, one after the other, all too near stores and restaurants and police stations, but Sundays, as much as other days, were dominated by the essential social and political spirit of the cities and towns: the status quo was God given, and that was that.

Against such a background Reinhold Niebuhr's emergence as one of this century's great critics, both appreciative and skeptical, of Marxist and Freudian thought is ironic indeed—and as a man always on the lookout for ironies, Niebuhr must have found that particular one especially interesting to contemplate in moments of introspection. In the 1920's, as a minister in Detroit, Niebuhr saw all too clearly what America's industrialism was doing to workers. His response was bold and fearless: he argued for a thoroughly different kind of society, and for doing so had to leave his pastorate. (He described that period of his life in a touching book, *Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic.*) In the early 1930's he became seriously and conscientiously absorbed in Marxist historical analysis and, as well, in socialist politics. (He was never one to separate the intellectual life from social and political activism.) He also took an interest in psychoanalysis, believing it to be a new and valuable means of self-scrutiny, but just as important, a source of help in a task to which he would never stop applying himself: the exposure of merely pietistic religion as a convenient exercise in self-delusion, not to mention self-aggrandizement, and as a source of all those banalities summoned by burghers to strengthen and justify the hold they have on property. As the decade moved along, Niebuhr achieved increasing prominence as a preacher of the social gospel with an obvious competence at philosophical speculation. He traveled widely, knew the heartland of this country as well as its

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Eastern intellectual watering grounds, and seemed the very model of the "progressive," well-educated Protestant minister, way ahead of all the churches in social and psychological vision.

Not that he wasn't writing the keenest of political analysis (indeed he never stopped), larded always with a knowing eye for man's various psychological inclinations. His journalism was sharp, incisive, shrewd and unashamedly immediate to the very end. He wrote in torrents during the 1930's, and gave of himself all too generously. He was among those who wanted to educate a whole nation to the evils of fascism, the wrongs of America's economic system, the guile and outright self-deception which enable men of the cloth to celebrate Mammon while pretending a faithful obedience to the Christ who delivered the Sermon on the Mount (pretending to themselves as well as to others, for the issue was, he knew, "resolved" at a "level" significantly unconscious). He was, in sum, an extraordinarily enlightened man: not superstitious, not tied to outworn religious dogma, a forceful enemy of all sorts of "vested interests," and a sophisticated observer of man's individual and collective psychological life. Marxists knew of his affinities to their outlook. No doubt, many urbane psychoanalyzed academics by the late 1930's found him the exception to their rule that the clergy were blind, not very smart, and at best, ineffectively well intentioned.

In 1939 Dr. Niebuhr crossed the Atlantic to deliver the Gifford Lectures in Edinburgh. He was by then an obvious leader of liberal Protestantism, and despite the grim and evident nearness of yet another World War, many who went to hear him no doubt expected an essentially optimistic presentation to the effect that Hitler and his kind were awful but not incomprehensible; that there were explanations to account for the rise of Hitler and for his seemingly unpredictable and demonic behavior; that, given the "application" of what men had discovered and with constant acceleration continued to discover, the world need not experience one "low, dishonest decade" after another. At no point did Niebuhr explicitly deny such a line of reasoning. He was not about to embrace (then, or at any time) an anti-intellectual or conservative viewpoint: a feverish call to mysticism; or a fundamentalist insistence that bad times are the result of God's judgment, so woe unto those who will not repent; or an insistence that radicals of various kinds were undermining the decent political and cultural values of the West's capitalist democracies. Nor was he about to forsake what Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud had taught him. Over and over again, he reminded his audience that Marxist analysis provides a "genuine and necessary contribution to the understanding of man." As for Freud, he took him quite seriously. At one point he observed: "The whole of Freudian psychology, not in what it declares but in what it implies, is really a striking proof of how remarkably spirit and nature, animal impulse and spiritual freedom, are compounded in human existence." From a man who obviously appreciated and wanted to underscore the *complexity* of man's situation, that was no small compliment.

On the other hand, he was determined to look with caution as well as enthusiasm at the ideas of both Marx and Freud, not to mention those of a whole range of philosophical and theological writers from Old Testament prophets and New Testa-

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ment disciples through St. Augustine to Pascal, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and on to Kierkegaard. The result was a large and enormously influential book: *The Nature and Destiny of Man*. The result, too, was a systematic and, I believe, successful effort to give the ideas of Marx and Freud the historical perspective they badly needed and which, in the hands of many of us, they still lack today, over thirty years later. Moreover, Niebuhr did not stray from his own territory in order to manage that achievement. This was not the book of a man who was interested in "religion and mental health"; or of one who marched up and down streets on behalf of the poor, the oppressed, and the persecuted, and wanted to write a "handbook" for the implementation of political change. He was indeed his own kind of sensitive psychologist; and one need not learn psychiatric jargon or go through the endless self-consciousness of sensitivity groups in order to achieve the kind of pastoral wisdom Niebuhr had acquired rather early on when he worked with Henry Ford's patronized and, upon occasion, thoroughly intimidated employees. He certainly was a reformer, a man too radical not only for the Detroit of the acquiescant 1920's, but even for large segments of New York's social activists of the 1930's. But most of all he was obsessed by history—its ironies and ambiguities, its puzzling inconsistencies and contradictions. Rather than throw up his hands in despair—a temptation whose presence no one as concerned and well informed as he could completely deny—he set about showing what it was that had gone wrong with the ideas of both Marx and Freud as they became (in the form of institutions of various kinds) a part of man's history.

To do so he drew upon orthodox Christian theology in what amounted to a stunning *tour de force*. He called upon the concept of original sin to help explain not only his vision, as a subtle and imaginative twentieth-century theologian, of the "nature and destiny of man," but also the serious difficulties which rise (out of nowhere, it seems) to plague various sectarian idealists, moralists, reformers, theorists, revolutionaries, and on and on. In Chapter IX of the first part of his lectures, "Original Sin and Man's Responsibility," he makes quite clear his awareness that he will not have an easy time of it in certain quarters:

> The Christian doctrine of sin in its classical form offends both rationalists and moralists by maintaining the seemingly absurd position that man sins inevitably and by a fateful necessity but that he is nevertheless to be held responsible for actions which are prompted by an ineluctable fate.

Yet he persisted, and not by watering down Pauline teaching or the grave words of the Old Testament prophets. He refused to consider original sin a metaphor for social injustice as it affects individuals. He refused to denounce parents and teachers, to declare them the ones who corrupt the spirit of all those utterly innocent, lovely, completely well-meaning infants and children. Rather, he insisted that it is in our nature to be self-centered, demanding, and manipulative. No infant, he knew, survives without those qualities. The child insists, screams, or merely whimpers because his or her body signals cramps, soreness, discomfort, or hunger. For long stretches the child is quite thoroughly wrapped up in a world of pleasure and pain,

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wakefulness and sleep—a world of the self. Moreover, we are all doomed to die, and cannot forget that fact. We crave life even as we see it slip away from us. Such facts are not only psychological ones; they are what have come to be called in this century "existential." In the 1930's existentialism had not caught hold of the West's intelligentsia. True, Sartre had just published *Nausea* when Niebuhr was writing his Gifford Lectures, but it was unavailable in English. And who before World War II knew much about the various books of Sören Kierkegaard? Camus had not published a word, of course; and Kafka was relatively unknown.

Niebuhr anticipated the influence these philosophical minds would have on so many of us in the post-war years of the 1940's and 1950's, up to the present time. He had already seen Marx's beliefs and convictions perverted by Stalin and his henchmen into mere slogans, and worse, into rationalizations and justifications for an awful dictatorship, increasingly in its long life given to bizarre, arbitrary and thoroughly murderous practices. As for Freud's beloved psychoanalysis, no government officials would make a mockery of its various tenets, but individuals (including psychoanalysts) would certainly manage to show how those who have obtained "insight" and worked out their "transference" reactions can nevertheless be mean, narrow, and even vengeful toward those who in various ways try to assert their intellectual independence. The irony was not one Niebuhr overlooked: in the name of communism, a small clique exploited millions, killed hundreds of thousands, set up a network of secret police agents, concentration camps, and prisons; and in the name of psychological truth particular individuals and the various groups or associations to which they belonged turned on one another with, to say the very least, unfortunate displays of self-righteousness. Who are the wise ones who don't betray the revolution? Who are the psychoanalysts who show in their daily personal and professional lives the kind of breadth of vision, open-mindedness, and generosity of spirit which so many troubled patients have themselves dreamed of acquiring after all their various "hostilities" and "neurotic" difficulties are thoroughly analyzed?

For Dr. Niebuhr the answers were to be found in St. Paul and St. Augustine, in Pascal and Kierkegaard, all four of whom he especially draws from, with both appreciation and intelligence. Like a number of recent Popes, he has no great affection for the capitalist economic system, yet he treasures the political rights that Western democracies have given to their citizens. Like many liberal clergymen, he does not run away from modern psychiatric knowledge, yet he sees man as more than what is contained in the formulations of various social scientists. Ultimately he falls back on paradox: man is fated to sin, finite as he is; yet man has freedom, a good deal of it. "It is within and by his freedom that man sins," he points out, and he freely acknowledges his debt to Kierkegaard in that statement and many others. He speaks of "dialectical truth," by which he means that the contradictions which any psychological or social observer finds in various men and women or in groups of people are not to be resolved by convenient or clever generalizations, however tidy or appealing. Self-love makes survival possible; and more, self-love is tied to that marvelous human particularity and complexity which novelists best portray and bring to life. Self-love also sets the stage for vanity, greed, spitefulness, and the sin of

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sins: pride. Salvation will not come about through Marxist revolutions and Freudian ones; true, they can lead to changes, good changes; but they lead to bad ones too. Hopefully the good will outweigh the bad. He is not sure, but he is willing to pray. And certainly he has no interest in allowing an emphasis on "original sin" to sanction reactionary politics and the narrowest kind of "old-fashioned" intellectual life on the grounds that anything new and challenging is but another kind of prideful danger, another cover-up for man's sinfulness.

It was an original and learned statement he made in the Gifford lectures, and one uttered at an extraordinarily momentous point in this century's history. Millions were about to die in a war waged under the most explicit of ideological auspices: Hitler as God, Mussolini as God, Stalin as God, the Emperor of Japan as God. And the West's democracies seemed forsaken, adrift, disenchanted with God (for all the outward signs of obeisance), and not quite sure which pagan deities—in the form of a series of cultural fads, obsessions and preoccupations—to embrace for any length of time.

Over the years Niebuhr's skepticism has proven justifiable, even as his passionate commitment to the social gospel has remained a source of encouragement to many who correctly fear the great danger of skepticism: despair, with its sense of futility about political activism. I am not sure that there are more people today than in his own time who follow Niebuhr's elegant and sophisticated argument on behalf of a fresh and responsive look at an old and much analyzed aspect of Christian theology. We do have about us, in the 1970's, "Jesus freaks" and others who promote a "religious revival," but not, I suspect, because the doctrine of original sin has won them over. Anyway, Niebuhr says repeatedly that the issue is one of "seeming absurdity," and thus a matter of faith, not of intellectual persuasion. He therefore wrote lectures and made a book to warn against the hazards of other faiths, the many secular ones which come and go. He threaded a way, called upon "dialectical truth," shunned all unqualified promises, and kept in mind that God's ways defy man's words. He also kept a wary eye out for a kind of "need" or "drive" many psychiatrists ignore or dismiss as evidence of "sickness": our stubborn search for God, or if He is denied, for an all-encompassing creed or formulation. It was Niebuhr's genius to see in messianic Marxism and Freudianism a desperate and, at times, all too self-assured pursuit of an ultimate answer to man's human situation with all its confusions and uncertainties. Millenarian secular movements are not, of course, especially uncommon in history, but they are not always, at their most promising moments, so quickly and precisely sized up for what they are, and by one who insists upon treasuring what is indeed quite valuable in their messages.

If Marx and Freud were nineteenth-century prophets who for very good reasons have held the twentieth century quite spellbound, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* is the work of a man who drew massively on philosophy and theology in order to give those prophets a place in man's history, and yes, in his "group psychology." Marx gave us a grand vision of where we are going, and Freud insisted that we never forget whence we come, so to speak, what it is in our past that will not let go of us. Reinhold Niebuhr simply asked us to acknowledge the visionary powers of both men,

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but to remember that ambitious and shrewd dreamers are not new to man; the wisest of us can stumble while looking at the stars or while knowingly engrossed with himself, and in so doing, mislead others. It takes a certain kind of prophet to see so exactly the limits of other prophets. With great care and diligence, and enormous scholarship as well, the Gifford lecturer for 1939 set down those limits, and for doing so, emerged as a man of this century for us to call upon with special attention and gratitude.

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CARLETON B. CHAPMAN

The Flexner Report by Abraham Flexner

EVERY NATION IN the western world seems to regard its system for medical education and the physicians it turns out as the best there are. Since World War I American spokesmen—usually but not always physicians—have consistently made the same self-congratulatory claim, something they did not dare do before 1910. The turning point was the publication of Bulletin Number Four of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, a gray paperback now universally known as *The Flexner Report.*[1] Whether American claims for superiority in medical education are, or ever have been, fully justified is beside the present point: the Report itself was one of the most influential documents, where higher education in the United States is concerned, ever compiled. Often quoted and seldom read, it was a document whose time had come. In fact, however, it was only the most visible feature of a long crusade to reform and regularize American medical education. The crusade accomplished its purpose in dramatic fashion.

It seems highly dubious that, without the singular driving force and ingenuity of its author, the Report could have amounted to much more than another respectable but ineffective addition to the archives of education. Abraham Flexner (1866-1959) was an educator and scholar par excellence, but not a physician. When he died he had been, for nearly half a century, a national force of such major magnitude that his obituary was carried on the front page of *The New York Times* alongside Khrushchev's San Francisco speech pleading for amity between the United States and the Soviet Union.[2] His reputation rested mostly on the Carnegie Foundation's Bulletin Number Four and on his personal efforts to implement it. But he was also, among other things, the founder and organizer of Princeton's Institute for Advanced Studies.

The Report was published in early June, 1910. Its reception was mixed. Those whose oxen were gored were more than critical: many were outraged. One brought

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suit for libel,[3] many wrote violent letters of protest, some of them anonymous. But the response was generally favorable, a fact no doubt owing in considerable measure to the careful spadework that had been done by the Council on Medical Education of the American Medical Association. A *New York Times* editorial said that, despite all the defects Flexner pointed out, the nation had a good body of physicians and that, in some spots, the Report was "contentious and unnecessarily irritating." The editorial concluded, however, that reform was needed and that the Report pointed the way.[4] The medical press reacted similarly. *American Medicine* said that the Report showed "animus against smaller institutions" and ignored the very significant progress of the preceding ten years, but went on to describe it as "epoch-making . . . fearless . . . specific," and to underscore its plea to "raise entrance requirements . . . to the highest possible point compatible with common sense and sound judgment."[5] The *Journal of the American Medical Association* said little about the Report itself, possibly because of the view, not yet dead by any means, that the Carnegie Foundation had stolen credit that rightly belonged to the Council on Medical Education, which had by that time begun to act in concert with the Association of American Medical Colleges. But the *Journal* backed its main recommendations.[6]

Two years after the Report appeared, Flexner joined the staff of the General Education Board, which had been established with Rockefeller money in 1902, and immediately brought medical education into focus. In 1919 he persuaded Rockefeller to set aside $50 million for the specific purpose of implementing the Report's recommendations and with this backing he set to work with a will. Using the Board's resources and his own genius as leverage to raise funds from local philanthropists, he brought about the transformation of many medical schools between 1919 and 1928. His thrust, in line with his emphasis in the Report, was usually to establish full-time faculties and to improve clinical teaching facilities. In later years he boasted that under his direction the Board had spent $50 million on American medical education but had added, by leverage, ten times that amount to the endowment for such education. "We had no authority," he wrote in his autobiography, "[but] we never lost sight of our goals—rather, the goals of Welch, Mall, and their associates [at Hopkins]."[7]

By 1928, when Flexner retired from the Board, the reformation of American medical education, although still in progress, was irreversible. Where a quarter-century earlier there had been over 160 schools, there were now 76, only a few of them proprietary or extrastandard. Most were attached to universities and, outwardly at least, most set the same academic standards, offered the same curriculum, and prescribed the same entrance requirements.

The Report

The Carnegie Foundation's Bulletin Number Four is divided into two major parts. The first, taking up about half the volume, *is* the report. The second contains

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survey data obtained from visits to 155 medical schools in the United States and Canada. A very minor third part is an introduction by Henry S. Pritchett, President of the Foundation at the time the Report was published.

Part One carries the message in vigorous hard-hitting language. After a lengthy historical sketch, which in itself is a small scholarly masterpiece,[8] Flexner sets out his main points in logical sequence. First, the proper basis for adequate training in medicine depends, at the very least, on a competent knowledge of chemistry, biology, and physics—knowledge that is so extensive it cannot be learned in high schools but requires at least two years of college training in which the sciences are featured. He goes on in a surprisingly modern vein to the effect that the physician's role is no longer solely concerned with individual and curative medicine, but is "fast becoming social and preventive," and thus requires broader, "more liberal" educational experience. The low level of entrance requirements prevailing at most medical schools—only two required a college degree, most required no college experience at all, and many failed even to require a high school diploma—rendered this kind of basis unattainable. Students entering medical schools without high school credentials, illiterate both linguistically and scientifically, would be unable to utilize adequate laboratory teaching facilities even if they were provided.

These views put Flexner very much in line with the most vocal nineteenth-century critic of American medical education, the indefatigable and irascible Daniel Drake (whom Flexner quotes). "The ranks of the profession," said Drake eighty years earlier, "are . . . filled up with recruits, deficient either in abilities or acquirements . . . (boys too often) indolent and averse to bodily exertion . . . too stupid for the Bar . . . too immoral for the Pulpit."[9] Drake, like Flexner, felt that the reason the medical profession had fallen to such a low state was that anyone able to pay tuition was admitted to medical school regardless of his level of preparation or other considerations. Flexner's reaction, however, was more specific than Drake's. His recommendation that minimal requirements include a high school diploma and two years of college-level science became, within a few years, the law of the land.

These points, however, despite their undoubted importance, are merely a prelude to Flexner's forceful and lengthy presentation of his most emphatic conviction vis-à-vis medicine and medical education. It is essentially the Prussian conviction: medicine is based solidly on *science;* the medical practitioner must be a *scientist,* treating every clinical situation as a scientific research project. And while he concedes that, in the serious clinical situation, even the best evidence is often inadequate as a guide to action, he adds: "The scientist alone [as opposed to the empiricist] draws the line accurately between the known, the partly known, and the unknown."

To his mind, the implications for medical education were enormous. If there is such a thing as an Art of Medicine, Flexner gave little sign that he recognized it. And *science* to him meant the natural sciences which, in view of the fact that his graduate work in Germany was in the field of psychology, seems unexpected. Viewed in context, however, it is understandable. In 1910 the natural sciences had come of age and many of their applications to medicine were becoming apparent. It was not so with

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the behavioral and social sciences—not, at least, in the English-speaking world. Flexner's conclusion was that American medical schools and curriculums should be thoroughly scientific and their purpose should be the training of "enlightened and progressive" medical scientists. He saw no need for "the routine school in which 'family doctors' may be ground out wholesale." His language leaves little doubt that he held the mass-produced "family doctor" in low esteem and considered the *ne plus ultra* among physicians to be the highly scientific and sophisticated clinician moulded in the Hopkins environment or its equivalent. His words intensified a polarization within the medical profession that persists to this day between the specialist with five or more years of post-M.D. training, board certification, and, very often, full or part-time university faculty connections on the one hand, and the general practitioner, often with only one year of post-M.D. training and no university faculty connection on the other hand. Flexner's contribution to the polarization, however, may rest in part on a misinterpretation: by "family physician" he was probably referring solely to the product of a commercial school whose knowledge of medicine was often so deficient that the service he rendered to patients was either innocuous, dangerous, or lethal. His conviction that effective medical education must be permeated with science led him to design a highly scientific curriculum for medical schools—one with the six basic biomedical sciences taught in both laboratory and lecture room in the first two years, and clinical subjects focusing on internal medicine in the last two. He recommended emphasis on bedside (in-patient) teaching in the last two years with only modest attention to the ambulatory (out-patient) setting.

He thought that teachers in the scientific school should also be researchers, evoking in the student the attitude "of the thinker and not of the parrot," and that "the progress of science, and the scientific or intelligent practice of medicine, [should] employ . . . exactly the same technique." He added a little-noted qualification: faculties should also make room for the "non-productive, assimilative teacher of wide learning, continuous receptivity, critical sense, and responsive interest." But, he says disdainfully, the scientific school should have no place for "the scientifically dead practitioner whose knowledge has long since come to a standstill and whose lectures, composed when he first took his chair, like pebbles rolling in a brook, get smoother and smoother as the stream of time rolls over them."

Flexner emphasized the need for smooth, continuing rapport between basic scientist and clinician, something which, in his mind, would be natural and even inevitable in the ideal scientific school. Pathology was, in this regard, accorded a special place. The establishment, however, of rigid compartments (premedical, preclinical, clinical) within universities and medical schools was ironic; certainly it was well outside Flexner's thought and intent.

In later chapters, Flexner had a fair amount to say about teaching hospitals (which he thought should have at least two to three hundred beds continuously occupied), the organization of out-patient departments, and the financing of medical education. Medical students, he thought, belong in teaching hospitals, and the governing bodies of hospitals should take them and the total academic need fully into ac-

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count. Of the 155 schools he surveyed, 120 were dependent solely on student fees. A good school, he warned, with a total of 250 students enrolled, should expect to spend up to $150,000 a year (in 1910 dollars). No more than 20 percent of this should come from student fees and the rest should be provided by the state or by endowment.[10]

He was convinced that state government had a binding obligation to assure competence by establishing rigid licensure laws to be administered by professionally competent and incorruptible Boards of Registration in Medicine. Such measures, Flexner knew, would make it impossible for commercial schools not associated with college or university to survive. He amply refuted the claims that such schools offered special opportunities for impecunious students to gain admission to the medical profession and that their graduates would usually practice in rural areas thus easing the faulty distribution of physicians that, then as now, plagued the nation. In any case, he said, it is better to have no doctor at all than a badly trained one.

He urged that the number of schools in the United States and Canada be reduced from 155 to 31 and offered a map to show where they should be located: 19 in large cities, 8 in large towns, 4 in small towns. All should be integral parts of universities or colleges. The total number of graduates should be reduced from 4,442 (in 1910) to about 2,000 annually, and the number should then be allowed to rise in proportion to the increase in the nation's population. The 31 schools operating at capacity could, he thought, produce up to 3,500 graduates a year.[11] And assuming that one additional physician would be needed for every 1,500 people added to the total population, he thought capacity might not be reached for one or two generations, somewhere between 1940 and 1970.

Part Two of the Report lists Flexner's findings in individual schools, state by state, province by province. Today, although the Report is mainly of archival interest, it is not difficult to discern why it generated so much objection when it appeared. It stated that two schools in Arkansas were "without a single redeeming feature," that the Augusta (Georgia) situation was "hopeless," that three schools in Texas were "without resources, without ideals, without facilities." He reserved his most glowing descriptions for Hopkins: "facilities are in every respect unexcelled"; clinical arrangements provide "ideal opportunities"; the dispensary "is admirably conducted." At Harvard, in contrast, he found "serious restrictions" where clinical facilities were concerned, and a "noticeable lack of sympathy between the laboratory and clinical men. Use of hospital material for teaching purposes is . . . limited. The teaching is in the main of the demonstrative character." The University of Pennsylvania came off slightly better than Harvard, but not as well as Hopkins. Lesser and more prudent men would almost certainly have hesitated to invite the disapproval of Harvard's medical brahmins, Arkansas deans, and Chicago's commercial entrepreneurs all at the same time. But Flexner, backed by Pritchett, seems to have had a fine appreciation of the value of shock treatment, as well as of sound scholarship and meticulous documentation.

The Foundation issued 15,000 copies, an unusually large number, of Bulletin Number Four in June, 1910. Neither Flexner nor anyone else could have anticipated the effects the Report was to have in the years following its publication: nor could

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they foresee the social and professional background within which the development of medical education was to proceed between the wars and after World War II. But if the Report and the earlier work of the Council on Medical Education were collectively the anvil on which reform was to be forged, Flexner himself was certainly the hammer. After the Report was published, he followed through as one of the shrewdest and most ingenious managers of philanthropic funds the country has ever seen.

The Results

In general, the effect of the Report was to accelerate changes already under way. Long before Flexner began his survey, the American Medical Association had proclaimed as semi-official policy the goals of eliminating commercial schools and reducing the number of new physicians produced each year. Major steps in this direction had been taken in the early eighties at the urging of John H. Rauch of the Illinois State Board of Health. At that time, the Board's *Annual Report* began to publish lists of schools whose diplomas were not recognized in Illinois;[12] subsequently, it also made public the showings of the graduates of individual schools on State Board examinations. These measures proved powerful: schools whose graduates consistently did badly had increasing difficulty attracting students.

In 1903, Frank Billings of Chicago, president-elect of the American Medical Association, told the Association at its annual meeting that the profession was becoming grossly overcrowded and that, to correct the evil, "the ease and facility with which a medical degree may be secured in this country must be diminished." The proprietary schools, he said, had to go.[13] And two years later they began to do just that. They continued to disappear at an increasing rate, although Flexner's ideal number, thirty-one, was never reached. Partly as a result of revisions in state licensure requirements, the Report's recommendations on entrance requirements were carried out relatively rapidly. By the early thirties it was impossible for a student to enter an American medical school unless he had successfully completed two years of college work and the standard premedical science requirements. By the end of World War II, most schools required the baccalaureate degree for admission although some still permitted students to enter medical school after three years of college work and awarded the baccalaureate degree at the end of the first year in medical school. Thus it took most students eight years after graduating from high school to attain the M.D. degree. The fifth year recommended in the Report—internship—became standard and those who aspired to specialty practice were faced with a lengthening span of residency (postgraduate) years. By the late forties, it took thirteen or more years after high school for students to complete the training requirements for specialty certification in surgery, internal medicine, and pediatrics. It often took longer still if they aspired to enter psychiatry or one of the narrower surgical specialties. Those electing

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to enter general practice might do so after a one-year internship, nine years after graduating from high school.

The so-called Flexner medical curriculum—two years of basic science and two years of clinical training—had been installed at Hopkins soon after the school was founded in 1893. And well before 1910, a few other schools had begun to follow suit. Within ten years of the Report's publication almost all remaining American schools had done so.

Clearly, in all these respects, the Flexner Report was far more catalytic than innovative. Nonetheless, the medical profession and the knowledgeable public came to regard it as the turning point in medical education, the infallible guide to revision and final form. The document ultimately acquired something like Talmudic status: to cite it was *de rigeur*; to criticize it unthinkable. And despite the very clear message of the record itself, all manifestations of change that became visible after the turn of the century were attributed to Abraham Flexner (not infrequently confused with his brother Simon) and his Report.

How did the Report acquire such status and influence? Its timing, as noted earlier, was ideal. It also stood virtually by itself for many years. In no other single document was so much information and informed opinion about American medical education set out. These reasons, standing alone, however, are inadequate. To them must be added the fact that the Report and its author were astonishingly successful in generating a flow of money into many of the nation's medical schools. The old cliché applies: *nothing succeeds like success*. And success, in the university world, as in the world of business, is measured to an important extent in dollars. Using his Report as a springboard, Flexner was able to persuade Rockefeller, Eastman, Brookings, and many other rich men that fine medical education as he defined it was a good thing for them and for their communities. It would be more cynical than the facts warrant to claim that his appeal was primarily to their vanity and to their personal anxieties about their own health, even though most were elderly men and some were ailing. It is safe to assume, however, that he did not rely solely on arguments having to do with academic excellence.

At any rate, the most important result of Flexner's efforts in the Report and later was the general acceptance, nominally at least, of the concept of the "scientific" school with an emphasis on strong semi-autonomous basic science departments, research-orientation, full-time faculty, and effective integration into the parent university. After Flexner, every physician was to be a scientist and a scholar, thoroughly conversant with the basic medical sciences and fully capable of applying them to the clinical situation. The purely empirical, rule-of-thumb practitioner was to be phased out.

But the total result was quite different from that which Flexner envisaged. The extent to which the new system for medical education induced its graduates to apply the scientific method to their clinical practice cannot be quantified. It is safe to say, however, that many graduates of the system lapsed into empiricism within a decade of graduation; some still do. Furthermore, most medical schools, despite impressive expressions of allegiance to parent universities and their ideals,

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still stubbornly resist any real integration. To this day, the *imperium in imperio* principle remains the rule rather than the exception.

The independence of medical schools was reinforced by the rapid expansion of the National Institutes of Health after World War II and their spectacular emphasis on research. At the time, organized medicine opposed support by the federal government for either medical education or national health insurance. Since Congress was persuaded that more dollars should be spent for health, it focused on research. Medical academicians argued that biomedical research would produce rich benefits for the nation and subsequent events proved them largely correct. There were also many, of course, who argued that additional support for medical education per se was critical, and more than a few who pointed out that support for research and education alone, without revision of an imperfect health care delivery system, would not produce the result Congress expected. To some degree it was political expediency that determined the result: support for biomedical research was politically innocuous and thus relatively easy to sell to the public. Funds were provided in increasing amounts, both for research construction and for research projects. Since awards were usually made to individual investigators within research-oriented departments, departmental autonomy was strengthened and the institution as a whole weakened, at least relatively.

Full-time medical faculties, research output, and the cost of medical education all grew apace. So did medical curriculum, but largely by a process of uncritical accretion. In the face of these forces, no power within most medical schools or their universities was impressive enough to bring about rational review and revision of premedical and medical curricula. By the midsixties it was apparent that the total situation was becoming unbalanced. Owing to the continuing maldistribution of physicians, the growing population, and the rapid increase in demand for medical services, the nation's supply of physicians was falling behind its need. Report after report emphasized the point. The Bane Report of 1959,[14] and the Coggeshall Report of 1965[15] both quoted the Flexner Report with respect and approval, but urged a dramatic increase in the number of physicians graduated annually. The Report of the National Advisory Commission on Health Manpower of 1967 repeated the point.[16] A Carnegie Commission report, appearing fifty-eight years after the Flexner Report, said that, based on 1966 figures, facilities for 75 percent more medical students would be required by 1976-1977.[17] In 1970, another Carnegie Commission report said substantially the same thing and also recommended shortening the time required to attain the M.D. degree after high school graduation from eight to six years.[18]

By the seventies, not only was Flexner's demand for limiting the number of medical graduates each year reversed, but the purely "scientific" curriculum as he envisaged it was also being subtly deemphasized. In contrast to his demand for "scientific schools" and a rigid single standard in medical education, the cry was for larger and larger numbers of well-trained family doctors, variously called primary physicians or generalists as opposed to highly trained specialists; and for shortening the curriculum. Schools specifically designed to accomplish these purposes were set

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up in the late sixties and early seventies. And even the most prestigious schools were considering special educational tracks for the same purpose. By a reversal of federal policy, research and training for research were beginning to be deemphasized and their funds restricted. The new climate brought into the open long dormant anti-intellectual and antiscientific overtones within and outside American universities and medical schools. And the Flexner role model of the highly trained scientist-physician began to lose its appeal to students. American medical education was losing the form Flexner gave it.

These were not results Flexner could have been expected to foresee. The complex and increasing demands on today's medical schools did not begin to take shape until well after World War II. Flexner would indeed have been *vox clamantis in deserto* had his Report called for the establishment of Departments of Community Medicine within the nation's medical schools. He had little to say about the existing health care delivery system, and the concept of consumer representation, whether of students or of patients, would have been utterly foreign to him and his colleagues both in and out of the universities. And while he must have known something of Germany's national health insurance system, he did not identify himself with the proponents of an American version if it: the Socialist Party and the American Association for Labor Legislation. Rather, he identified with American philanthropy; by applying its vast resources, he hoped to introduce the highest university standards of teaching and research into medical education largely via the medical school's basic science departments working in close cooperation with full-time clinical faculties. He did not foresee that the creation of strong, semi-autonomous basic science departments in medical schools might, in fact, create a barrier between the medical school and its parent university. Nevertheless, in some institutions, it did just that: it isolated the basic medical sciences from their natural counterparts within the university, to the detriment of both and to the intellectual disadvantage of the student.

It is apparent that Flexner had some idea of what was happening within a few years and that he was appalled by it. As early as 1913, when the American medical school was just beginning to be redesigned, Flexner grew concerned about its stultifying effect on the enterprising student who had had a taste of academic independence while in college. The American school, he wrote, closes down upon him "with an exhausting and depressing uniformity."[19] By 1925 his criticisms were stronger. "It is bad enough," he wrote, "that all [American medical schools] alike run a graded four-year course which . . . places upon all students a burden that is excessive and unwise; that schools graduate together those who begin together; that all reckon in hours and courses rather than in terms of large, massive subject-accomplishments." And, in somewhat the same vein, "Our present fetters were . . . forged in order to compel wretched medical schools to give unfit medical students a 'better' training. Now that that end has been measurably accomplished, the means have become a fetish, blocking further improvement." He urged strong institutions

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not to be deterred by state boards or by "educational associations" from moving "further and rapidly in the direction of university methods."[20]

He seems to have been oblivious, even in retrospect, to the fact that his Report, by overstating its case, was in a measure responsible for some of the evils he decried fifteen years later. Nor does he seem to have realized that at least some of the officials of organized medicine with whom he had worked so cordially in 1909 and later were, in fact, more interested in using reform to preserve the integrity of their professional guild than in approaching academic excellence. To give him the benefit of the doubt, he thought he was contributing to the development of a dynamic and flexible educational system that would continually focus on academic and professional quality. It seems, however, that the nature and tendencies of quasi-autonomous professionalism, both within and outside the university, escaped him.

To Flexner, the ideal university was the greatest and noblest of human institutions. And the Prussian university, with the medical sciences fully integrated into its intellectual life, came close, in his mind, to achieving the ideal. He feared that the medical sciences would deteriorate into empirical and totally applied offerings if they were not under the day-to-day influence of university standards of intellectual rigor and scholarship. It was largely on this basis, and because of the shallowness of basic science offerings in American proprietary schools, that he recommended the full and meaningful integration of the medical school into the university. But it has not happened. At Harvard, the Charles River seems to be too hazardous an obstacle for all except a few audacious faculty members and students to cross, although administrators do so regularly for largely nonacademic purposes. The University of the great state of Texas operates five medical schools, all many miles from the central campus at Austin and all, academically speaking, largely separate institutions. And at Flexner's beloved Hopkins, the medical school has so dominated the university that the existence of the Homewood campus is sometimes unknown outside Baltimore and its environs.

The reason for Flexner's failure to induce university faculties, medical and nonmedical, to concern themselves with the total sweep of education for medicine may be that he had little or no real understanding of intra-university politics. Never having been a working faculty member, he could not fully comprehend the extraordinary vehemence with which individual university faculties defend what they consider to be their territories. Within the universities, it is nothing new that arts and sciences faculties, with their commitment to liberal education, often look with a mixture of disdain, distrust, and envy on medical faculties. And medical faculties have never been known for turning the other cheek. An adequate explanation is not at hand, although discrepancies in pay scales and alleged differences in teaching loads are important factors. Deeper divisions stem from disagreements in basic educational outlook and in what is considered by the several faculties to be intellectually respectable.

Arts and sciences faculties not infrequently blame the Flexner model for medical education, with its rigid premedical requirements, for impairing and degrading student's learning and for restricting their "broadening" exposure in baccalaureate programs. College biologists, chemists, and physicists resent the fact that most of their students, premeds and others, are merely fulfilling distributive requirements rather

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than pursuing what, in their eyes, is the noblest of goals: a major in their fields. One college physicist wrote recently,

> the decreasing significance of B.A. degrees in the American marketplace, coupled with an incredible flood of pre-med candidates . . . has contributed to . . . the "prepschoolization" of the Ivy League. . . . The college experience simply becomes an arrow pointing to grad school. Course selection is determined by the academic requirements of grad schools. . . . The grad-school enforced obsession with grades is almost frightening.[21]

His points are well taken, but the process he describes—the inexorable passage of content, especially in the sciences, from graduate school to college and from college to high school—has always been with us. The process, usually too gradual to be easily perceived, is traditionally resisted by faculties, including those in the basic medical sciences. And in the marketplace, the opposite movement is taking place: a high school diploma was once as valid a credential as a bachelor's degree was some years ago, and as some graduate degrees are now.

The Flexner Report may indeed have assisted in the degradation of the B.A. degree by contributing to the ossification of premed requirements, but to judge fairly the total effect of Flexner and his Report on the American university requires a rare knowledge of background and context. Today's obsession with grades, however, cannot logically be blamed on the Report. In Flexner's time there was no other measure of academic achievement and competence. The rebellion against grades as the criterion of academic success at the undergraduate level is of recent origin and no one—student or faculty member—has as yet come up with a fully adequate substitute where large numbers of students are concerned. After the Flexner Report, with increasing competition for a limited number of openings in medical schools, premeds became grinds and the grinds ultimately became doctors. The grind was a product of the prevailing accent within universities on grades which Flexner accepted, combined with the teaching of science, mostly descriptive, in rigid compartments and in great detail, which he did not accept. In fact, most of the report's recommendations were logical enough at the time; although some were politically naive. The rigidity that developed in medical education was not part of Flexner's original intent; had he understood the system within which he was working better, it might have been avoided. Flexner's political naïveté extended also to the American political process at the state level. His insistence on the establishment of State Licensure Boards was based on the assumption that only the most expert and selfless professionals would be asked to serve on them. The inevitable interplay that resulted between political forces within the health professions and elected state officials seems to have been beyond his powers of foresight.

In the light of today's academic and intellectual reality, the Flexner Report needs to be reviewed in depth and in context. Flexner's accent was on quality, however inadequate and counterproductive some of his recommendations may have been. To this end, he wanted to establish effective interfaces between the sciences in medical school and in the university, but did not foresee today's overemphasis on departmen-

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tal autonomy or the dogged confusion of *department*—an administrative concept—and *discipline*—which has intellectual reference. Modification of those barriers is now an urgent necessity in order that the educational opportunities for all students can be upgraded, whether they are headed for medicine or not, and in order that Flexner's dream of abolishing purely rule-of-thumb medical practice can at last be approached whether the physician is a family doctor, generalist, or specialist.

A successor to Bulletin Number Four or a considerable addendum to it is in order, but where is the Abraham Flexner of our time?

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2. "Abraham Flexner Is Dead at 92; Revolutionized Medical Schools," *The New York Times*, September 22, 1959, pp. 1, 35.

3. The Saint Louis College of Physicians and Surgeons, which Flexner said was one of the worst in the country. Both Flexner and Pritchett, along with George H. Simmons, were named as defendants. The suit never came to anything. See note 8.

4. "The Making of Doctors," *The New York Times*, June 12, 1910, p. 12.

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Law and the Modern Mind by Jerome Frank

THE STUDY AND practice of law in the Common Law countries of the English-speaking world does not place great value on abstract statement or grand theory. Similarly, critics of the legal system have rarely sought, much less attained, a general view of its distinctive characteristics and weaknesses, contenting themselves with attacks (often justified) upon the way law deals with one social problem or another. Jerome Frank's book, *Law and the Modern Mind,* is therefore a work to be prized, if only as a specimen of a rare legal species which attempts a systematic and unrelenting critique of the premises of conventional legal thought. To assess the work's significance, however, it is necessary both to understand the tradition against which Frank rebelled and to trace the course of legal thinking as it has evolved since *Law and the Modern Mind* was published in 1930.

To do this, we shall begin with the revolution in legal education[1] initiated at the Harvard Law School in the 1870's which imposed a new kind of education on the increasing number of students abandoning law office clerkships to prepare for legal practice in universities throughout the nation.[2] The Harvard School viewed itself as bringing a new scientific method to the study of law. According to Christopher Columbus Langdell, the Harvard Dean who first argued that law should be recognized as one of the specialized disciplines forming the post Civil War university, it "was indispensable to establish at least two things: first that law is a science; secondly, that all the available materials of the science are contained in printed books [of judicial opinions]."[3] As he saw it, the task of the legal scholar, like that of the natural scientist, was to transform the disordered data found in judicial opinions and render them intelligible by demonstrating the way in which each decision could be explained in terms of the fundamental legal principles implicit in the Common

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Law. Unlike the natural scientist, however, the legal scholar was confronted with a special problem.[4] Especially as academics shifted their attention from English to American law, the fact that opinions in various jurisdictions contained contradictory reasoning and conflicting results could not be easily evaded. These inconsistencies, however, did not discourage followers of the Harvard School from trying to order the Common Law into an architectonic system. Trying to save as much data as possible, superior scholars, in elaborate multivolume treatises and innumerable articles,[5] scrutinized the conflicting reasons given in inconsistent judicial opinions in an effort to organize rules of law around a coherent set of substantative principles basic to the Anglo-American tradition. In addition to their sustained research effort, the Harvard School also sought to teach their students to approach their tasks in a scientific spirit. Unlike law offices which taught clerks the particular rules of a particular jurisdiction, the universities taught them to analyze judicial decisions critically so that they themselves could discover, if possible, the "true" rule, one which not only explained seemingly inconsistent precedent, but was rooted in fundamental legal principle as well.

In 1923, this movement toward the rationalization of law took an important new institutional form. Joining with leading members of the bench and bar, academics formed the American Law Institute to project the scientific study of law into the very center of professional life.[6] The Institute undertook a massive project to state dominant doctrine clearly in the expectation that dissenting courts would change their views and recant when confronted with their aberrations. These Restatements of the Law (as they were authoritatively entitled) not only represented an effort to fulfill the everpresent professional demand for clarity and legal certainty; they also served the ideological and economic interests of the dominant elements of the profession. The fundamental legal principles of the Common Law of the 1920's were permeated with the laissez-faire philosophy. Their clear articulation would serve as a bulwark against the forces for change which threatened the economic interests of the dominant members of the law profession as well as their larger conception of the nature of the good society. Indeed, even the Institute's choice of subjects suitable for restatement reflected the limited legal concerns of the nineteenth-century state enshrined both by classical economics and by Social Darwinism.[7] The Institute tried, for example, to clarify the law dealing with contract, property, tort and the intergenerational transfer of wealth,[8] but lavished no similar concern upon areas like economic regulation or family law where the Common Law did not reflect a coherent policy. In short, collaboration between academy and bar was so fruitful because important elements in each shared a common view of the role of law in the good society. Confident that laissez faire would yield the greatest good for the greatest number, both groups sought to facilitate the voluntary transactions of free individuals within a legal framework that hindered private initiative as little as possible.

The familiar saga of the Supreme Court's constitutional adventures of the 1920's and 1930's must be placed in the perspective of this legal culture. The Court's decisions striking down social welfare legislation were hardly an aberrational exercise of arbitrary power by five or six men in black robes; indeed, they were deeply rooted

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in dominant patterns of legal thought. The view that a proper judicial decision must be grounded not on the peculiarities of a particular power balance in a particular jurisdiction, but on a clear rule of substantive law solidly rooted in the laissez-faire legal tradition was dominant not only in the Court but in the entire profession. Because of this legal culture, the judges could, without a sense of arbitrariness or impropriety, strike down a minimum-wage law on the ground that it deprived the women of Washington, D.C. of the right to work for less than $16.50 a week.[9]

The 1920's can be seen, then, as a Classical period: academy, bar and bench were allied in the pursuit of legal clarity in the name of an ideal society of free individuals. This is not, however, the way in which contemporary lawyers usually view their predecessors. They prefer to focus on a series of great dissenters to the Harvard School, thereby mistaking a magnificent stand of redwoods for the forest. It is useful to distinguish three generations of dissent.

Before the turn of the century, a small number of critics—most notably Holmes[10] and Thayer[11]—denied the assumption of the scientific school that the Common Law had a fundamental structure discernible by the architectonic intelligence. They insisted instead that legal doctrine was basically the historical product of social conflict and political compromise. Even Holmes, however, in his great history of the Common Law, did not transcend the scientist's concern with the analysis of legal doctrine, although he did take pains to describe its historical development.

A second generation, coming to maturity in the early twentieth century and importantly affected by Progressive politics and Deweyite pragmatism, explored a broader range of phenomena. Its leading figures—Brandeis, Frankfurter, and Pound—investigated nonlegal facts to which the law should seek to respond, explored the ways institutions had in fact responded, and suggested legal responses which would conform better to their highly idealistic interpretation of the American tradition.[12] Pound and Frankfurter embarked upon an ambitious empirical investigation of the criminal justice system in Cleveland.[13] Brandeis, with a brief that devoted two pages to legal argument and over a hundred to describing working conditions and legislative responses to them, successfully convinced the Supreme Court that it was reasonable for Oregon to limit a woman's workday to ten hours.[14] Like Dewey, these men emphasized the need for social experiment and for the pragmatic shaping of state power to preserve old values by giving them new meaning under modern conditions.

It is, however, the third generation of dissent with which we are concerned here: the Legal Realists, whose work began in the 1920's[15] and reached its maturity in the 1930's. Though the Realists are a diverse group, a common aim unifies their different endeavors. Each of the Realists, in his own way, attempted to move beyond the talk of rules and principles heard in the courtroom and the academy and to expose them as myths obscuring most of the principal factors at work in the decision-making process. While no single work is typical of the Realist movement, Jerome Frank's book, *Law and the Modern Mind*,[16] has worn comparatively well and is probably the most comprehensive Realist effort to expose the fallacies involved in the Classical effort to state legal rules clearly and to systematize them around fundamental legal

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principles. Assuming a Freudian point of view, Frank condemned this effort as an immature response to the fact that men have only imperfect knowledge and control over reality. Despite their cleverness, Frank argued that lawyers had not attained enough emotional maturity to transcend the juvenile wish for an omnipotent father capable of providing complete protection against a harsh reality; that indeed they had undertaken an elaborate course of rationalization to transform the law into a father-substitute which could give a clear and authoritative answer to all the problems of social existence.

According to Frank, the fundamental problem for the legal profession was not intellectual but emotional. The basic task for lawyers, and especially judges, was not to articulate an extrapersonal standard of judgment on the basis of history and social philosophy, but to look within themselves and seek to understand the nonrational wellsprings of their own conduct. Once he attained a mature self-understanding, a judge would have the personal strength to understand that neither legal tradition nor social philosophy had the coherence so readily attributed to them by the dominant legal culture. Once they accepted the broad range of conflicting ideals that coexisted within the received legal tradition, neither lawyers nor judges would be victimized by the illusion that a difficult case could be decided by reasoning from asserted legal principles. Instead, by creatively combining the disparate elements of the legal tradition, they would seek to fashion a legal solution which could serve as a just resolution of the conflicting interests involved in the case before them. Frank's book, however, made very little effort to define the substantive outcomes which would best accommodate social conflicts. To embark upon this task would be to commit the same old fundamental legal error, and Frank would not play Father Knows Best.

Frank's whole-hearted embrace of Freudianism was atypical even among the Realists.[17] Others did, however, use the tools of political science,[18] anthropology,[19] and statistics[20] to engage in institutional studies which denied the autonomy of legal science and sought to expose it as a smokescreen disguising the realities of human motivation and interaction among legal decision-makers. More traditional Realist studies contented themselves with demonstrating that supposedly fundamental principles did not in fact explain the existing patterns of decision.[21] Like Frank, however, the other Realists did relatively little to formulate new criteria by which substantive legal outcomes could be evaluated.[22] At the core of Realism was an extraordinary optimism, a belief that once men were free from all the damaging myths of the past, they would have little difficulty understanding the proper shape of a just society.[23]

The Realist critique generally met with a hostile reception in the legal establishment. Even the older generation of critics of Classicism repudiated the Realists for their preoccupation with debunking the ideals of the past.[24] Nor did Realism, any more than previous critiques, induce the adherents of the older orthodoxy to retreat in disarray. The Institute continued its ambitious effort to restate the law (or at least certain portions of it), and when the first set of Restatements was completed in the 1940's, a second set was begun, and has not been completed yet.[25] Similarly, the bulk of legal writing in the academy, lawyer's briefs, and judicial opinions still follows the

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classic Harvard mode of conducting a reasoned search among legal materials for "the" legally correct doctrine.

However, a basic change in legal thought can be discerned beginning in the 1940's. No longer was the fundamental problem for legal theory defined in terms of Langdellian legal science; no longer did the best minds seek either to refine classical legal science or to rebel against it. Instead, the fundamental problem was defined in terms of the issue left unresolved by Legal Realism: once it is perceived that the substantive legal tradition speaks ambiguously when consulted for the resolution of a hard case, is there anything lawyers can do to define a proper decision, beyond hope, with Frank, that decisionmakers will have the requisite psychological maturity?

With this new basic question, a new Legal Process School[26] fashioned a very different legal orthodoxy based on the work of some of the great dissenters of an earlier age—particularly Brandeis and Frankfurter.[27] Sound legal decision-making, according to the new school, was not simply a product of psychological maturity; indeed, it could be assured only if the lawyer were trained to recognize himself as the occupant of a *social role* with definite social expectations and to coordinate his role with those of the other role-players in the legal process. It followed that a mature judge was not entitled to roam at will and impose upon the parties before him whatever decision seemed to him best to resolve their conflict. Instead, he had an obligation to use only those modes of reasoning "appropriate" to the judicial role. Since it is far from obvious what is appropriate in a particular legal role, the school devoted its considerable talents to defining the proprieties with greater precision. Legal Process writers sought to determine the proper ways for a court to deal with prior judicial precedent and with the language of statutory mandates. More generally, they sought to demonstrate that even when judges resembled Frank's emotionally mature paragons, the courts were often not the institutions best equipped to make many judgments of social importance and that therefore judges should often defer to the policy resolutions made by legislatures, administrative agencies, other judicial systems, or by the private parties themselves. In short, the law gave up its large aspirations of the 1920's, and turned inward upon itself in an effort to evaluate its own work product. Abandoning in large measure its effort to justify decisions by reference to a substantive legal tradition rooted in a comprehensive vision of a good society, legal scholarship concerned itself with the ways in which the structure of the existing legal process of dispute resolution limited the extent to which each decision-maker could properly impose his own *particular* social ideals upon the world around him.[28]

While it is far too soon to comprehend fully how this emphasis on process will ultimately affect the law in practice, there can be little doubt that its impact has already been profound. One highly visible example is the revolution in thinking about constitutional law that has occurred in both the courts and the academy since 1940. According to today's conventional Legal Process wisdom, the mistake of the Old Court of the 1920's and 1930's in striking down social welfare legislation was not that it had a *wrong* vision of the good society but that it purported to have *any* comprehensive vision at all. The Legal Process School sees the articulation of social

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philosophy as a task for the political, not the judicial, process because the executive and the legislature, unlike the courts, are directly responsible to the people through the democratic process. It follows from this judgment of relative institutional competence that the Supreme Court should act with great restraint in striking down legislation as unconstitutional, intervening not with broad pronunciamentos but only with measured and reasoned opinions carefully limited to the facts of a particular dispute.[29]

The advocates of judicial restraint, however, have not been alone in worshipping at the shrine of Process. Those who favor activist judicial review have justified themselves not by developing a comprehensive theory of social justice requiring the protection of certain rights, but by constructing an alternative theory of the Legal Process. According to some, aggressive judicial review is justified on behalf of insular minorities because the political process in a democracy is inherently incapable of adequately protecting their fundamental interests.[30] According to others, the Supreme Court's role as the interpreter of the language of the Constitution itself requires active intervention when legislation violates the "clear" commands of our fundamental law.[31] On the basis of both of these arguments,[32] the Warren Court moved aggressively to assure that fundamental elements of the Legal Process would be structured in a fair way; thus the political process, the criminal process, and, more recently, the processes of civil and administrative litigation, have been revolutionized to assure at least some access for all citizens. It is only in mounting a long-delayed constitutional assault on the national disgrace of state-supported racism, that the Warren Court undertook a statement of principle which arguably transcended a concern with one or another process of goverment.[33]

The god of Process seems Janus faced. It is not our purpose here, however, to ascertain whether believers in judicial activism or believers in judicial restraint have a truer view of the deity. Even less is it our purpose to declare that the god of Process should not be worshipped among others. We simply wish to emphasize the extent to which a set of common concepts dominates the discourse even of groups which consider themselves profound antagonists.

In reviewing legal thought in the twentieth century, then, we find a dialectical pattern familiar to those accustomed to seeing the world through Hegelian spectacles. Concern for Substantive Law was opposed by concern for the Individual Personality; then both were synthesized as merely aspects of the larger Legal Process.[34] Those of us ill accustomed to perceiving ideas dialectically, however, hunger for a more particularized understanding of the reasons for these rather fundamental changes. Clearly, the message of the Realists and of Jerome Frank was peculiarly suited to intellectual and political as well as legal conditions in the 1930's. The attack on the effort to construct clear rules grounded in the laissez-faire legal tradition seemed justified by the Great Depression's apparent demonstration of the practical failure of laissez-faire as a social ideal. Similarly, Frank's emphasis on the importance of personality seemed vindicated when the titanic constitutional battle between the Old Court and the New Deal

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appeared to be settled by the single vote of Justice Owen Roberts in favor of vital New Deal legislation.

On a deeper level, moreover, Frank's refusal to assess decisions in terms of a substantive theory about the good society reflected a wide-spread bankruptcy in American social philosophy during the 1930's. The Depression had discredited laissez-faire individualism, but no alternative social theory had emerged which provided an acceptable account of the law's role in achieving a just society. The Marxist analysis was so uncongenial that not a single leading member of the legal establishment in any of its branches ever systematically sought to introduce its distinctive vocabulary into legal discourse.[35] And when lawyers looked to less threatening sources, they found a confusion no less profound than their own. Although the rising generation of Keynesians challenged the high priests of the old order—the neoclassical economists—they did not offer lawyers a well-defined social philosophy to replace laissez faire. Keynesian thinking, still in its developmental phase, was terribly vague on the all-important issues of how and where government intervention should take place. Academic philosophy was even less helpful, an increasingly dominant logical positivism contenting itself with the warning that value judgments were incapable of strictly meaningful elaboration.

This failure to develop a coherent social philosophy had a political parallel in the inability of the New Deal to develop a coherent action program. What the decade witnessed was a number of diverse government initiatives grounded in little else than a perception that the old order had failed. In this context, Frank's stance in favor of personal maturity when confronting social disorder may well have been the most reasonable position a decision-maker could adopt.

Similarly, the Legal Process approach taken by the next generation can be interpreted in terms of much larger political and cultural tendencies. On the political level, the lawyer's emphasis on process seems a response to the fact that New Deal expedients had succeeded in stabilizing the structure of decision-making without generating any coherent political theory ranking the ends to be served by state action or the rights to be protected against public intrusion. Moreover, governmental efforts to render more coherent the New Deal's concerns with social justice and economic malfunction were subordinated time and again to the perceived need to respond to both real and unreal threats from abroad. On the cultural level, legal theory's focus on processes rather than ends corresponded quite closely with similar tendencies in philosophy,[36] sociology[37] and political science.[38]

In attempting to understand the movement of legal thought in the twentieth century, however, it would be a mistake to limit one's vision arbitrarily to the closely related areas of political action and social thought. Without straining too hard, one can discern parallels to the thought of Frank and his fellow Realists in twentieth-century art and science. Stravinsky, Picasso, Joyce, Einstein, and Freud each radically challenged the effort to structure objective reality into a single determinate rationalizable order. Moving beyond this, each inaugurated a search for a new kind of order consistent with their attack upon the simpler conception of rationality held by their predecessors—a search which has led many fields of inquiry to turn inward

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upon themselves until the very idea of a common cultural tradition has become problematic.

So conceived, the present legal situation dramatizes a more general problem of twentieth-century thought. It is surely disturbing to learn that lawyers are so little trained to consider in a sophisticated way the relationship between legal order and the ends of social life. To respond with Frank that value judgments should be made by mature men on the basis of the facts of the case or to respond with the Legal Process School that these judgments should depend on institutional perspectives begs the fundamental point that our civilization will be shaped in important ways by the substantive vision of the good society that predominates in the minds of America's leading lawyers. Whether the next generation of lawyers will achieve any clarity in this regard will depend not only on themselves but on others whose concerns are often far removed from the practice or even the theory of law. At least on the intellectual level, recent developments have been heartening. Over the past decade, both social philosophy and welfare economics have taken a turn which seems promising to those who view law as a central mechanism for reconciling the values of liberal individualism with the realities of increasing social interdependence and demands for social justice.[39] The future course of legal theory depends, however, not only on the life of the mind but on the world of social and political action. And here the auguries are uncertain at best.[40]

References

1. For interesting initial attempts to trace the academic trends discussed in this paper, see Robert Stevens, "Two Cheers for 1870: The American Law School," *Perspectives in American History*, 5 (1971), 405; William Twining, *Karl Llewellyn and the Realist Movement* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1973), pp. 3-87.

2. It is true, of course, that university law schools, both then and now, differ as to their sophistication and aspirations. In the twenties, schools like Harvard, Columbia, Yale and perhaps a half-dozen others, conceived themselves as national institutions which were not obliged to spend much of their time preparing students to pass the bar exam of a particular state. Many other schools, however, adopted this practical goal as their most important or even exclusive objective. While the statements made in the text apply most obviously to "national" law schools training the elite, I suspect that careful research would reveal that these trends have had an important impact upon regional or local institutions, many of whose teachers obtained their education in the leading schools. Since the history of legal education is a field largely ignored by both lawyers and historians, however, no systematic work on this question has yet been attempted.

3. Christopher Columbus Langdell, *Record of the Commemoration, November Fifth to Eighth, 1886, on the Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Founding of Harvard College* (1887), p. 98, excerpted in Arthur E. Sutherland. *The Law at Harvard* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1967), p. 175.

4. Whether Langdell's conception of science as a form of categorization corresponded in any significant respect with the concept of science common in the late-nineteenth-century academy is a question which needs more investigation than it has been given.

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5. The development of the tradition can be traced over time by inspecting such works as Thomas M. Cooley, *A Treatise on the Law of Torts* (Chicago: Callaghan, 1878); *The General Principles of Constitutional Law in the United States of America* (Boston: Little Brown, 1880); John Henry Wigmore, *A Treatise on the Anglo-American System of Evidence in Trials at Common Law* (Boston: Little Brown, 1904); Samuel Williston, *A Treatise on the Law of Contracts* (New York: Baker Voorhis, 1920); Joseph Henry Beale, *A Treatise on the Conflict of Laws* (New York: Baker Voorhis, 1935); Arthur Linton Corbin, *A Comprehensive Treatise on the Working Rules of Contract Law* (St. Paul: West, 1950). These monumental efforts, of course, are merely the most dramatic examples of similar attempts appearing in the periodical literature each month.

6. For a history of the founding of the American Law Institute, see Herbert F. Goodrich and Paul A. Wolkin, *The Story of the American Law Institute* (St. Paul: American Law Institute Publishers, 1961).

7. Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (New York: George Braziller, 1959), pp. 121-133, contains some very perceptive paragraphs on the relationship between Social Darwinism and neoclassical economics.

8. The subjects selected for Restatement were: Agency (1923-1933), Conflict of Law (1923-1935), Contracts (1923-1932), Torts (1923-1938), Property (1926-1935), Trusts (1927-1935), Restitution (1933-1937), Security (1936-1941), and Judgments (1940-1942).

9. Adkins v. Childrens Hospital, 261 U.S. 525, 542, 556 (1923).

10. Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Common Law* (Boston: Little Brown, 1881) may be most accessibly obtained in the edition edited by Mark DeWolfe Howe (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1963). Holmes' "The Path of the Law" may be found in *Harvard Law Review*, 10, No. 8 (March 1897), p. 457.

11. James Bradley Thayer, "The Origin and Scope of the American Doctrine of Constitutional Law," *Harvard Law Review*, 7, No. 3 (October 1893), 129.

12. For a recent discussion of this group, see G. Edward White, "From Sociological Jurisprudence to Realism: Jurisprudence and Social Change in Early Twentieth Century America," *Virginia Law Review*, 58, No. 6 (September 1972), 999.

13. *Criminal Justice in Cleveland* (Cleveland: Cleveland Foundation, 1922). For an earlier statement of Pound's philosophical position, see "The Scope and Purpose of Sociological Jurisprudence," *Harvard Law Review*, 24, No. 8 (June 1911), 591; 25, No. 2 (December 1911), 140; 24, No. 6 (April 1912), 489. For another work by Frankfurter evidencing a similar concern with the way institutions actually functioned, see Frankfurter and James M. Landis, *The Business of the Supreme Court* (New York: Macmillan, 1927). For a discussion of Frankfurter's writings which emphasizes this theme, see Alexander M. Bickel, "Applied Politics and the Science of Law: Writings of the Harvard Period," *Felix Frankfurter: A Tribute*, ed. Wallace Mendelson (New York: Reynal, 1964), p. 164.

14. Brief for the State of Oregon in Muller v. Oregon, 208 U.S. 412 (1908).

15. For the unhappy story of the abortive attempt by some of these young scholars to revolutionize the curriculum at Columbia Law School in the 1920's, see Brainerd Currie, "The Materials of Law Study, Part Three," *Journal of Legal Education*, 8, No. 1 (1955), esp. pp. 64-78; William Twining, *Karl Llewellyn and the Realist Movement*, pp. 41-70.

16. It was first published in 1930. The most accessible edition today is published by Anchor Books-Doubleday (1963). Almost simultaneously with the publication of Frank's book came Leon Green, *Judge and Jury* (Kansas City, Mo.: Vernon, 1930); Karl Llewellyn, "A Realist Jurisprudence: The Next Step," *Columbia Law Review*, 30, No. 4 (April 1930), p. 431; Karl Llewellyn, *The Bramble Bush* (printed privately, 1930; 2nd ed. New York: Oceana, 1951). The most important discussion of the Realist movement may be found in William Twining's recent work, *Karl Llewellyn and the Realist Movement*.

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17. See, however, Harold Lasswell's striking work, *Psychopathology and Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930).

18. C. Herman Pritchett, *The Roosevelt Court* (New York: Macmillan, 1948); Fred Rodell, *Nine Men* (New York: Random House, 1955).

19. Karl Llewellyn and E. Adamson Hoebel, *The Cheyenne Way* (Norman, Okl.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1941).

20. For an extraordinary statistical study, grounded in behavioral psychology, see Underhill Moore and Charles C. Callahan, "Law and Learning Theory: A Study in Legal Control," *Yale Law Journal,* 53, No. 1 (December 1943), 1. See also the studies considered by Stevens, "Two Cheers for 1870: The American Law School," *Perspectives in American History* (1971), pp. 477-480.

21. Walter Wheeler Cook, *The Logical and Legal Bases of the Conflict of Laws* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1942); Karl Llewellyn, *Cases and Materials on the Law of Sales* (Chicago: Callaghan, 1930); Wesley A. Sturges, *Cases and Materials on the Law of Credit Transactions* (St. Paul: West, 1930).

22. For a dramatic demonstration of an incapacity to develop affirmative standards for evaluation, see Thurman Arnold, *The Symbols of Government* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1935); *The Folklore of Capitalism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1937).

23. It is this point which provides, at least to this writer, the key to an understanding of the work of the quintessential Realist jurist, William O. Douglas.

24. Roscoe Pound, "The Call for a Realist Jurisprudence," *Harvard Law Review,* 44, No. 5 (March 1931), 697, answered by Karl Llewellyn (with the help of Jerome Frank), "Some Realism About Realism—Responding to Dean Pound," *Harvard Law Review,* 44, No. 7 (June 1931), 1222. Another illuminating exchange can be found in *Columbia Law Review,* 31, No. 1 (January 1931): Mortimer Adler, "Legal Certainty," p. 91; Karl Llewellyn, "Legal Illusion," p. 82, and Walter Wheeler Cook, "Legal Logic," p. 108.

25. In fairness to the American Law Institute, it should be noted that beginning in 1952 the Institute also turned its attention to the task of writing model statutes in legal areas where legislation was predominant.

26. The writers considered here have not previously been identified as a school, although there is a hint of a similar idea in G. Edward White, "From Sociological Jurisprudence to Realism," p. 1027. Thus, at the risk of offending some who are included and some who are excluded, I shall enumerate a number of the highpoints in the School's development: Lon L. Fuller, *The Law in Search of Itself* (Chicago: Foundation, 1940); Paul Freund, *Understanding the Supreme Court* (Boston: Little Brown, 1949); Edward H. Levi, *An Introduction to Legal Reasoning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949); Henry Hart and Herbert Wechsler, *The Federal Courts and the Federal System* (New York: Foundation, 1953); Alexander M. Bickel and Harry H. Wellington, "Legislative Purpose and the Judicial Process: The Lincoln Mills Case," *Harvard Law Review,* 71, No. 1 (November 1957), 1; Henry Hart and Albert Sacks, *The Legal Process: Basic Problems in the Making and Application of Law* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1958): this important book was never published though the mimeo "tentative edition" of 1500 pages can be bought at the Harvard Law School; Henry Hart, "The Supreme Court, 1958 Term, Foreword, The Time Chart of the Justices," *Harvard Law Review,* 73, No. 1 (November 1959), 84; Herbert Wechsler, "Towards Neutral Principles of Constitutional Law," *Harvard Law Review,* 73, No. 1 (November 1959), 1; Karl Llewellyn, *The Common Law Tradition: Deciding Appeals* (Boston: Little Brown, 1960); Alexander M. Bickel, *The Least Dangerous Branch* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962); Ronald Dworkin, "The Model of Rules," *University of Chicago Law Review,* 35, No. 1 (August 1967), 4; Herbert L. Packer, *The Limits of the Criminal Sanction* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1968); Harry H. Wellington, *Labor and the Legal Process* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1968) and Louis L. Jaffe, *English and American Judges as*

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Lawmakers (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969). Unfortunately, this discussion of the Legal Process School was written before I came across Duncan Kennedy's essay on "Legal Formality" in the *Journal of Legal Studies*, 2, No. 2 (June 1973), 351, which contains a different, though equally preliminary, approach to the Legal Process School and promises a more searching appraisal in a forthcoming essay.

27. Some members of the Legal Process School—notably Hart, Sacks, Jaffe, Bickel, Wellington—quite explicitly see themselves as carrying on the tradition of Frankfurter and Brandeis. It should be noted, however, that the greatest Realist of the 1930's, Llewellyn, came in the 1950's to a very similar Legal Process position in his Common Law Tradition, though his relationship to the Brandeis-Frankfurter tradition is a good deal more distant.

    A more elaborate treatment of the Legal Process School would also seek to assess the importance of such earlier writers as Benjamin Cardozo. *The Nature of the Judicial Process* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1922); John Chipman Gray, *The Nature and Sources of the Law* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1909).

28. While here, as elsewhere, I am limiting myself to a discussion of the most prominent trends, it would be wrong to ignore completely the existence of a dissenting group, led by Harold Lasswell and Myres MacDougal, who roundly condemned the movement away from a consideration of the substantive values furthered by the legal order. See Harold Lasswell and Myres MacDougal, "Legal Education and Public Policy: Professional Training in the Public Interest," *Yale Law Journal*, 52, No. 2 (March 1943), 203. Whatever the strengths and weaknesses of the Lasswell-MacDougal approach, it is enough to note here that it has been adopted only by a very small number of legal scholars outside Professor MacDougal's speciality, international law.

29. These views are best developed in the works of Bickel, *The Least Dangerous Branch* and *The Supreme Court and the Idea of Progress* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), and in the opinions of Mr. Justice Frankfurter and Mr. Justice Harlan.

30. This theme, which is elaborated in many Supreme Court opinions, has its source in the famous "footnote 4" of Chief Justice Stone's opinion in United States v. Carolene Products, 304 U.S. 144 (1938).

31. This theme is elaborated most vigorously by Hugo J. Black, *A Constitutional Faith* (New York: Knopf, 1968); Charles A. Reich, "Mr. Justice Black and the Living Constitution," *Harvard Law Review*, 76, No. 4 (February 1963), p. 673.

32. For an article by a leading activist judge which joins these two themes in a characteristic way, see J. Skelly Wright, "Professor Bickel, The Scholarly Tradition and the Supreme Court," *Harvard Law Review*, 84, No. 4 (February 1971), 769.

33. While it is true that the Fourteenth Amendment only demands that "no *state* shall . . . deny to any person . . . the equal protection of the laws" (emphasis supplied), the Warren Court was adept in finding the requisite state involvement even in cases where seemingly private institutions took a major role in initiating and enforcing racist practices. Moreover, distinguished commentators persuasively argued that given racism's pervasive impact upon American institutions, the Court was quite correct in tracing much "private" discrimination to its historical roots in state sponsorship. See Charles L. Black, "Foreword: State Action, Equal Protection, and California's Proposition 14," *Harvard Law Review*, 81, No. 1 (November 1967), 69. Whether the Burger Court will continue this expansive interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment is, however, a very open question.

34. More precisely, personality is conceived as an input into the Legal Process and substantive law as an output. The normative study of the inputs and outputs, however, is subordinated (as much as this is possible) to considering the way in which the Process itself ought to be arranged.

    It should be noted that the Hegelian construct seems to fit the facts better than one which would be suggested by the followers of Thomas S. Kuhn's important theory presented in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2nd ed. 1970). Kuhn argues that a scien-

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tific community does not reject one basic explanatory paradigm, however poorly it may explain the facts, until another basic paradigm has been developed. In contrast, the Realists rejected Classical legal science despite the fact that the shape of an alternative mode of analysis could not yet be discerned with any clarity.

Of course, all this may only mean that, despite Langdell, law is not a science, and so its theoretical development does not display a structure similar to the one Kuhn discerns.

35. To this very day, the works of the leading Marxist theorists, such as Pashukanis, are hardly known in American law schools. The available English translation of Pashukanis' *Theory of Law and Marxism* may be found in Hugh W. Babb, *Soviet Legal Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951). See also Lon L. Fuller's discussion in "Pashukanis and Vyshinsky: A Study in the Development of Marxian Legal Theory," *Michigan Law Review*, 47, No. 8 (June 1949), 1157.

36. C. L. Stevenson, *Ethics and Language* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1945). The works of the followers of Ludwig Wittgenstein have a similar tendency although it is not a necessary consequence of an ordinary language approach to philosophy. For a recent work which reflects both the strengths and limitations of a Wittgensteinian approach, see Hanna Fenichel Putkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice* (Berkeley: University of California, 1972).

37. Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1951); "An Outline of the Social System," *Theories of Society*, ed. Talcott Parsons *et al.* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1961), p. 30.

38. David B. Truman, *The Governmental Process: Political Interests and Public Opinion* (New York: Knopf, 1951); Robert Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

39. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1971); Guido Calabresi, *The Costs of Accidents: A Legal and Economic Analysis* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1970).

40. This essay owes a great deal to my many conversations with William E. Nelson. It is part of a larger project dealing with the relationship between legal theory and the concept of social justice supported by the National Science Foundation.

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MICHAEL C. J. PUTNAM

Three Philosophical Poets by George Santayana

GEORGE SANTAYANA on several occasions defined his thought in terms more appropriate to literary criticism than to philosophy. In 1930, looking back on his past work, he declared, "My pleasure was . . . in expression, in reflection, in irony." Writing of his own accomplishment some seventeen years later, he states that "It aspires to be only a contribution to the humanities, the expression of a reflective, selective, and free mind." His detractors, offended by his apparent violations of philosophy's ordinarily prosaic schemata, styled him a poet, too personal in his reactions to deal in abstract speculation. His reply was that, on the contrary, philosophy at its best was the product of the critical imagination's musings after truth.

In the voluminous output of this triple talent, there is no better example of this kind of philosophy than *Three Philosophical Poets*. Here Santayana scans the work of three poets: Lucretius, Dante, and Goethe—monumental minds who chose verse as the medium to expound their wisdom. In analyzing Santayana's critique, I will approach it not only as a cultural document of importance in its own time, but also as a work with limitations which now seem apparent. Taking into consideration the alterations in the science of criticism over the last three score years, I will try to sort out which methods and views maintain their value and which force us to disagree.

According to Santayana, "Lucretius is the poet of substance. The ground is what he sees everywhere; and by seeing the ground, he sees also the possible products of it." In Lucretius, he says, man's wisdom "rests on understanding of things, so that what happiness remains to us does not deceive us, and we can possess it in dignity and peace. Knowledge of what is possible is the beginning of happiness." He sees Lucretius as the supreme imaginer of nature, teaching us the scope and limits of our own lives.

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And life, for Lucretius, is essentially vain. As Santayana puts it:

> Lucretius' notion, for instance, of what is positively worth while or attainable is very meagre: freedom from superstition, with so much natural science as may secure that freedom, friendship, and a few cheap and healthful animal pleasures. No love, no patriotism, no enterprise, no religion. So, too, in what is forbidden us, Lucretius sees only generalities—the folly of passion, the blight of superstition.

In Lucretius' philosophy, though the substance of our world may seem permanent, life is always in a state of flux, happy or sad. Only mutation is universal: nothing is born without the death of something else. Within the materialistic structure of this world, the creative force of Venus is forever vying with the destructive force of Mars. Moreover, since both the soul and the body of human beings are mortal, there is no reason to fear death; hence religion, which depends on our belief in immanent gods and on our superstitious terror of life after death, must be dismissed.

Santayana searches for the same flux in the mind of Lucretius as Lucretius envisions in nature. He offers detailed evidence of Lucretius' "profound melancholy" and yet ends his essay by suggesting that Lucretius' "art of accepting and enjoying what the conditions of our being afford also has a perennial application." Donning, for a moment, the hat of a romanticist, Santayana would have us see Lucretius, the naturalist and philosopher of observation, displaying "sympathy with the movement of things, interest in the rising wave, delight at the foam it bursts into, before it sinks again." Unfortunately, a reader of *De Rerum Natura* must seach a good deal to find scattered examples of the poet's clear enjoyment, sympathy, or delight in the external world. Detailed observation we certainly find: at one excited moment the poet offers thirteen reasons why the direct evidence of the eyes cannot be trusted. More regularly, however, even scientific particulars receive a negative poetic thrust. Lucretius likens the limitless number of originating atoms swirling in the void to an enormous, violent shipwreck on a treacherous sea. Their infinite variety also elicits a negative analogy from the poet's imagination. Because they are invisible, any convincing proof of their variety must be drawn from comparison to a tangible species of life around us. Lucretius chooses as a simile one calf among the many in existence, and points out that he is clearly distinguishable by his mother from all others. In a detail that adds nothing of scientific importance but has a deep effect on the reader's sensibility, Lucretius adds that he is lost and happens to have been sacrificed in blooded offering to the gods.

Since he sees Lucretius as a naturalist, both aware and detached, Santayana would have us close our eyes to the poet who accompanies the philosopher, to the man behind the mask of reason: "Experience appears in Lucretius, not as each man comes upon it in his own person, but as the scientific observer views it from *without*." Surely, however, the verbal magic of Lucretius the poet helps prejudice and augment the philosopher's intellectual purposes, and in Lucretius the resulting design is one of darkness, shading more often than Santayana admits from momentary melancholy into sustained pessimism. Lucretius sees not only that Mars, the force of violence and disruption, is ever with us, but that Venus, too, has a passionate side that often rouses the poet and the world he describes to frenzied acts of

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irrationality, destructive as well as creative. At the conclusion of each major segment of the poem the tone is largely despondent. Santayana decries "the unspeculative fashion of modern pessimists," and fails to hear irony in Lucretius' voice when he ends his disquisition on the progress of civilization with the comfortless words: "And this, little by little, has advanced life to its high plane, and has stirred up from the lowest depths the great seething tide of war."

Despite Santayana's suggestions to the contrary, Lucretius does not opt for the complete immortality of nature, at least not in our sphere: "one single day shall hurl it to ruin, and the massive form and fabric of the world, held up for many years, shall fall headlong." As if to underscore this sentiment and to give full vent to his preoccupation with death, Lucretius ends his work vividly and abruptly with a devastating plague which destroys the city of Athens. While Santayana recognizes Lucretius' fear of mortality, he views it only as part of the ebb and flow of existence, ready to be counterbalanced by some positive influence. In fact, Santayana refuses to accept the negative ending as it stands ("if the poem had ever been finished . . ."), probably because the conclusion's unrelieved tension and gloom contradicts, by the emotion of poetry, Santayana's yearning for order and balance in nature and life. With more faith than validity, Santayana imputes his own belief in the balanced processes of nature and life to his ancient predecessor.

Santayana recognizes that Lucretius' hostility to superstition (and to that part of beauty which goes beyond the natural) is actually incompatible with his stance as a naturalistic observer: "Lucretius studies superstition, but only as an enemy; and the naturalistic poet should be the enemy of nothing. His animus blinds him to half the object, to its more beautiful half and makes us distrust his version of the meaner half he is aware of." The two points here are akin. Lucretius must disavow religion partly because it posits something supernatural and suprarational with control over mankind. He can no more admit the presence of mysterious numinous forces in nature than he can yield to the potentially destructive reactions ("the rising wave . . .") which the full force of nature's seductive beauty might arouse. Only a generation later, Virgil, himself possessed by the intensity and quality of landscape and its divine presences, gently revealed that Lucretius, in his effort to assay the causes of things, was refusing to face fear, fate, and the terrors of postmortal life. He understood the crucial, stifling meaning of Lucretius' inhibitions. Virgil's keen awareness of how nature's indifference to man's plight is intimately linked with his necessary belief in (and worship of) the mysterious and miraculous goes far beyond Santayana's almost grudging acknowledgement of the presence of the irrational in existence.

It is a measure of Santayana's honesty as well as of his rage for order that he intimates a question which he could not pose but which readers of Lucretius in this more nihilistic age must ask: Is not the near incompatibility in Epicurean thought of philosophy and poetry one of the reasons why *De Rerum Natura* is still an exciting imaginative as well as moral document? The philosopher professing unconcern and espousing a calm retreat from life's pressures is constantly at war with the poet aware of nature's dynamism and gifted with the heightened powers of expression to project

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it. A philosophy that seeks to rid the world of life's dreads and passions is essentially antipoetic. Discussions of the meaning of death and of the necessary place of the emotions in human life are intellectual foci toward which thoughtful inhabitants of Epicurus' antisocial, antiseptic garden cannot turn. In spite of such prohibitions there remains an impatient, energetic, excitable, even unstable genius behind *De Rerum Natura*, and we may suppose that some of Lucretius' pessimism stems from the challenge his personality and imagination suffered from the choice of Epicurean naturalism as a theme. For an Epicurean there is no higher, ethical order than nature against which men can measure their lives. In his thought and verse, the poet should rationalize and control nature's infinite commotion much as he must stabilize or even suppress his own basic human leanings. When we see how little Lucretius succeeds in thus imposing order (how fortunate for his poem and his readers that he fails!), we can only wonder whether he fully believes the dogma he propounds.

The strength and validity of Santayana's portrait of Lucretius is both enhanced and hindered by his streak of idealism, an innate classicism within the realist. Santayana sees a poet who retreats from life and betrays so little of himself in his writing as the perfect vehicle to allege the vanity and madness of life along with man's utter mortality and the transitory nature of human individuality: "One who lives the life of the universe cannot be much concerned for his own." To each puny creature in his passing, Santayana sees Lucretius extending the comfort of freedom from superstition and emotion. Lucretius, Santayana posits, regards nature with a philosophy which "divines substance behind appearance, continuity behind change, law behind fortune." But in this age of the absurd, criticism that relies so heavily on the formality of rationalism is partially suspect. Santayana, the rational idealist, easily accepts a naturalistic, systematic analysis of the world and the homely, self-effacing ethic that follows in Epicurus' version. But he never asks whether science and poetry might here be in conflict, whether what is logical, inductive, and concrete can be made to conform to what is largely intuitive. Since the presence of the irrational in much of the thought of classical antiquity escapes him (and would, no doubt, have appeared to him a paradox), it is all the harder for Santayana to divine it beneath the surface of a philosophical poem which at least superficially disavows its motive power. His pleasure in watching the poet defining and explicating blinds him to the spectacle of the same poet desperately shying away from myth or from intuiting the ineffable, from attempting to state what remains beyond the canons of scientific scrutiny.

On one level Lucretius must avoid the allure of myth because of its tainted association with divinity. However, on each occasion where a mythic figure appears in *De Rerum Natura*—figures such as Venus and Mars in the opening proem—Lucretius exploits the potential effect on the reader's imagination and through symbol explains fact. Though he disavows the existence of such figures, as a poet he himself is thoroughly under their spell. For example, the Magna Mater, the great mother of the earth, is sketched at some length in the second book. Drawn through the cities of man, she appears calm and emotionless, as does, to the superficial observer, the globe for which she stands. Yet she has among her attributes

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a yoke of lions, wild beasts, a crown of battlements, emasculated priests who clash cymbals and a band of armed soldiery delighting in the sight of blood. This is a dramatic picture of the excitement around and under the world's calm surface, though scarcely a positive one.

Lucretius would successfully exalt the rational mind only if his poetry succeeded in convincing us that the mind is in fact rational. It is no insult to him now to say that he does not convince us. When Virgil praises Lucretius for demystifying nature he fails to see—or at least to state—that Lucretius is actually building up, perhaps with unwitting irony, his own very negative, very anti-Epicurean mythology. Santayana, too, gave us a sharp analysis of Lucretius' originality in seeing nature through reason and expounding her variety with sustained conviction. Now, however, we have learned to discern further levels in this great poet which, though they may be less positive and uplifting, have equal strength and perhaps still greater truth.

If Lucretius is the poet of nature and substance for Santayana, Dante is "the poet of salvation." While Lucretius offers his readers "a vision of nature and of the limits of human life," Dante projects "spiritual mastery of that life, and a perfect knowledge of good and evil." Santayana soon modifies this hyperbole, however: "Dante is always thinking of the divine order of history and of the spheres; he believes in controlling and chastening the individual soul; so that he seems to be a cosmic poet, and to have escaped the anthropocentric conceit of romanticism. But he has not escaped it." Santayana the naturalist faults Dante for his avowal of Christian "superstitions," his belief in original sin and retributive justice, and his historicizing of Platonic idealism. Nevertheless, his praises far outweigh this censure. In the first place Santayana, like most of us, stands in awe of the sheer sweep of Dante's interests and enthusiasms as he presided over the merger of Greek and Hebraic elements in the Christian theology codified by Aquinas. "Probably for the first and last time in the history of the world a classification worked out by a systematic moralist guided the vision of a great poet." Dante unites ethics and imagination, form and feeling in an extensive, sincere vision of man as a historical creature and as a supernatural being, existing at once in the circumscribed time of earth and in eternity.

Because of his penchant for idealism, Santayana probably found *La Divina Commedia* the most satisfying of his three chosen masterpieces. The medium of comedy enables Dante to give full and immediate expression to the excitement and diversity of our world because its totality, bad as well as good, is his stage. This is comedy, of course, with an epic thrust: the writer as poet stimulates us constantly; the writer as pilgrim wayfarer draws us temporally toward eternity, movingly toward stability. Lucretius wrote didactic epic, in which the surface philosophy of order and unconcern is contradicted by the deeper, poetic exploration of the irrational and of the potency of death. Dante offers instead epic comedy, a near perfect union of poetry and philosophy, of human impulse and governing rationality; he allures us away from terrestrial motivations toward divinity's immortal calm and satisfaction.

It is logical that Santayana, as an idealist, finds the *Inferno* the least satisfying of

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the *Commedia*'s three parts, though later-twentieth-century readers may, on the contrary, consider Dante's creativity here at its most intense. This is not because evil is suddenly more fascinating to us than good (Milton's Satan has long since proven the magnetism of evil) but because we now embrace existentialism: we find life incapable of scrutiny in scientific or idealistic terms, and feel that each individual must work out his own destiny, for better or worse. Santayana is repelled by the *Inferno* for two reasons. The first smacks of personal bias. The poetry of hell, "that torture-house," offers continuous examples in which "the damned are damned for the glory of God. This doctrine, I cannot help thinking," says Santayana, "is a great disgrace to human nature." Here Santayana allows himself to forget, momentarily, the theological paradox of God as Love, creating evil as well as good, damnation as well as sanctification. Dante, himself earth-bound and humane, avows that those who spurn God's love are nonhuman, unfulfilled on earth and less so in *Inferno*. *Inferno* is peopled with the unresponders whose momentary refusals have become sempiternal. A man's punishment, though it may seem subject to the vindictiveness and vengeance of awesome power, in reality derives, once more, from his own exercise of will, from his choice of "il ben de l'intelleto."[1] In the words of Virgil, the poet's guide, "There is innate in you the faculty that counsels and that ought to hold the threshold of assent."[2]

A second reason for Santayana's hesitant approach to the *Inferno* stems from a reaction, fed by his streak of classicism (though here he might have disclaimed the term), to what Goethe calls Dante's "gruesome greatness." The *Inferno* abounds in "vulgarities," with much of "purely personal and dramatic interest," with decisive episodes that may be "powerful and vehement, but they are not beautiful." Santayana's response to beauty relies on immediate detail, which, in Dante, is sometimes deliberately repellent, and forgets more expansive notions of sympathy. Santayana, the aristocrat, can marvel at Dante's portrait of the tortured love of Paolo and Francesca, disembodied, unceasing, passionate, or of Ulysses' total allegiance to reason in an ultimately goalless search. Nevertheless, I venture that the very physicality as well as the fixity of the woes of a Ugolino upset Santayana's innate feelings of decorum and justice. Dante's wise genius, however, forces us to be both involved and aloof at once—to stand mesmerized by a poet's weeping, pitying, and vengeful self, and then, as pilgrim and everyman, to suffer Virgil's cathartic, distancing rebukes: "Who is more impious than he who sorrows at God's judgment?"[3] In rebuking Dante the poet, portraying suffering, Santayana forgets Dante the wayfarer, seeking love, fascinated enough by sin and its punishment to purge it truly, and in the end to view even the world and its purposes as a "sorry semblance."[4] Religion and poetry combine with desire to lead the loving souls toward *Paradiso*, but Santayana on occasion averts his glance from less happy, more realistic, more human facts which Dante, the universal humanist, presents on the way. Evil may be unpleasant and unaesthetic, it may impede the idealist's progress toward perfect form, but it has equally sure, if gloomy, credentials as an envoy of truth. And, ironically, Dante's final vision of perfection is that of a spiritual vacuum whence all natural instincts—the stuff of poetry, base as well as elevating—have

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been eliminated. This being so, how can *Paradiso,* however supreme its subject, fail to be less moving than its two forceful predecessors?

For kindred reasons Santayana takes Dante to task for pride, forgetting how vital a role both egotism and humility play in this expanding dialogue between artist and pilgrim. Dante is, for example, not only the implied object of Virgil's rebuke to Capaneus—"O Capaneus! in that your pride remains unquenched you are punished the more . . ."[5]—but its author as well. Nevertheless, Dante's involvement with self, which grows less restrained as the negative attractions of the *Inferno* reach a crescendo, an involvement which the poet himself views with obvious fear,[6] provides an essential impulse in this comedy of changes. We watch the refinement of love into Love, as all selfhood is lost and desire perfected. Santayana may interpret what intervenes negatively, as the poet in pride of intellect presumes the role of judging God and seer of souls, but only at the risk of forgetting a prime source of the enormous breadth of humanity ("largeness of landscape" is Santayana's fine phrase) that peoples Dante's wide moral universe. It is "history"—those fallible figures, facts and moments in time that, to Santayana the idealist, stain Dante's Platonic quest for the ultimate in supernaturalism—which forms the very stuff of the poetry that raises this philosophy above prose and warms scholasticism's chill tomes. In another context Santayana praises Dante as "the master of those who know by experience what is worth knowing by experience; he is the master of *distinction.*" By his use of italics, Santayana means to underscore the moral positivism of "worth." The present effect of his words, no doubt unforeseen by him, is to elicit a negative dimension to "distinction" so as to embrace now all categories of human behavior and not merely those of superior value.

One senses relief when Santayana turns from *Inferno* to the "perhaps more poetical" *Purgatorio.* From a frozen world whose only activity is ceaseless torture out of time, culminating in Lucifer's cold stability, we are back in a more understandable sphere where faults on a simpler scale than hell's grandiosities are purified and process is again a cause for joy. This is naturalistic supernaturalism, a land that shakes itself in acclaim as each soul ascends to a higher platform and man is led gradually toward a renewed earthly paradise. It is only in the shimmer of *Paradiso,* however, in which motion and stability are productively unified, that man at last enhances the best in his own nature to become absorbed in an ideal. He has finally been taught "to love and to renounce, to judge and to worship."

La Divina Commedia is the perfect poem for Santayana, and he tells us so. To a later-twentieth-century reader the value of Santayana's perceptions lies in his constant understanding, lacking in his analysis of Lucretius, of the relationship in Dante between poetry and meaning, imagination and philosophy. To be sure, the famous letter to Can Grande della Scala, whoever its author may be, leads the way in pressing us to find allegorical, ethical and anagogical layers of intent beneath the literal in Dante. Santayana seizes on this richness, fully sensitive to how Dante turns local into figural (Santayana called the process succinctly "Dante's objectification of morality") and to how his psychological perceptiveness, though Santayana would eschew the adjective, brilliantly lures his audience along.

Dante's progress by reasoned loving up the theological ladder to contemplation

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deeply appealed to Santayana, the optimist, realist, and harmonizing seeker after truth. Santayana clearly demonstrates how the abstract and the sensational, the grand system and its symbols, have become one in the art of this great poet.

If Dante is the poet of salvation and Lucretius of nature, Goethe is the poet of existence, of "human life in its immediacy, treated romantically." According to Santayana, "Goethe, in his *Faust*, presents experience in its immediacy, variety, and apparent groundlessness." Goethe's magical medley, his volume of life, exhorts us to "live hard in a romantic fashion." It is apparent by now that for Santayana such a life is only a beginning in the search for philosophical stability: "Experience in all its extent, what Goethe represents, should be at the foundation." To him, *Faust* is nothing but a foundation, for romanticism offers only tone and feeling. Santayana sees no structure, no totality (a favorite word), no guiding principle in this "sea of sensibility. . . ."

Santayana, with his classicist leanings toward order, did not, in his examination of romanticism, recognize the paradox that form often lies in formlessness, that the very nature of Faust's ever unfulfilled but continuous gropings toward knowledge is, in itself, a type of system. Faust has pondered the proposition Santayana would have him believe: that the life of reason is preferable to the life of nature. When he opens the book of Nostradamus to the sign of the Erdgeist, symbol of life's infinite variety and ceaseless alteration, Faust, the unfulfilled scholar, bypasses the rationality he has hitherto naively extolled and extends an immediate sympathy to the earthspirit. He is rejected: "You are kindred with the spirit which you comprehend, not with me." This fluctuation between reason and experience, between classicism and romanticism, is at the core of *Faust*. The character Faust may be defined as a devotee of romanticism but Mephistopheles and Goethe see to it that *Faust* is not so readily categorized.

In this total context of search and struggle, Goethe often dismisses or negates intimations of classicism. There are two striking instances in the second part of the drama. The first is the scene in the third act among Helen, Faust, and their child Euphorion. The location is Arcadia, a utopian landscape where the myth of the golden age is realized. It is a proper setting for Helen, symbol of ideal beauty and perfect harmony between man and nature. Her offspring, beautiful as his features are, dies as a result of his intense emotional sympathy with suffering. Like Icarus he takes flight, victim of passion, ignorant of his finiteness, attempting to overreach his human limitations. He is one aspect of Faust which is not fully eliminated even in death.

Another undercutting of any penchant for order in the titular hero comes later, after Faust has become a visionary public figure, and is reclaiming land from the sea for practical use. He wishes to evict an elderly couple, Baucis and Philemon, long dwellers on a spot which stands in the way of his sophisticating designs. At his order, their hovel is burned and the old people are killed. The classical prototypes of integrity toward the gods and happiness through simplicity are ruthlessly destroyed by

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the omnipotent Faust, who scarcely admits any malfeasance as he pursues his nominally civilizing enterprise.

What Santayana would wish from *Faust* (and what he more readily finds in Lucretius and Dante) is "a solution to the moral problem of existence." We sense that his naturalism is repelled by Faust's moments of visionary transcendence while his idealism is offended by the hero's often amoral path through experience. The romantic pursuit, however, by its very nature, posits a lack of solution, a craving that is never satisfied. Goethe may have intended a Dantesque progress toward divinity: at the beginning of the second part, Faust claims to Earth, "You stir and prompt a mighty decision—to strive for life's highest forms with all my power," and Goethe, in a conversation with Eckermann on June 6, 1831, spoke of Faust's "ever higher and purer activity up to the end." His play itself, however, leads in more ambiguous directions. In an ironic juxtaposition, for instance, Lynceus the watchman sings a hymn to the beauties of nature—far and near, moon and planets, forest and deer—just before the cottage of Philemon and Baucis is burned to satisfy Faust's impetuous whim.

Here it is primarily a question of poetic form, although Santayana is more fully cognizant of Faust's—and Goethe's—fluctuations of idea than of Lucretius' darkening negativity. Santayana is once again unwilling to grapple with the relationship between thought and statement, between the thinker and his expressiveness. *La Divina Commedia* is a comedy with an epic, didactic impetus toward a clear, positive goal; the relationship between thought and statement is unambiguous. *Faust*, however, is a different story. It is a tragedy, filled with startling moments of lyricism, whose insatiate protagonist, symbol of potentially infinite creativity, is forever drawn down by his human limitations though he may ruthlessly seek to escape them. Goethe rings many variations around his theme. In this mutable world where aspiration is constantly frustrated, error and negation play a vital role. Inner nobility is balanced by insufficiency and guilt, reasoned idealistic speculations by intense earthy passion, cosmic and human patterns of arrangements by the unnatural realm of Mephistopheles. Good may be realized through evil but, at the same time, evil is regularly thwarting good.

Santayana salvages what he can in the way of philosophical coherence, "what is serious in the moral of *Faust*," by appeal to Spinoza's doctrine of viewing life "under the form of eternity": "Now the complete biography of Faust, Faust seen under the form of eternity, shows forth his salvation. God and Faust himself, in his last moment of insight, see that to have led such a life, in such a spirit, *was* to be saved; it was to be the sort of man a man should be." Dramatic consistency is sought (and dubiously found) by appeal to the grand rubric of romanticism. I suspect that Santayana's other instinct, that this "tortuous and overloaded drama" never forms a complete whole, is nearer the truth. Certainly it is closer to the spirit of those who live two generations later, though our reasons for honoring its greatness would be based on far different premises of artistic integrity than those espoused by, or even open to Santayana. The subject of *Faust* is man as a creature living in time, not as a composite entity surveyed beyond the reaches of temporality. To show life's lack of wholeness, to exhibit

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the fragmentation of our existence, is part of Goethe's purpose. We may define our life as hell reaching toward heaven, but when Faust finally dies and reaches the empyrean, what he gains is a realm which is a burlesque—albeit a noble burlesque—of his former life on earth, dotted with figures displaying fine but still human qualities. Since Faust is to become a teacher, we might not be far wrong in surmising that the cycle will begin again and Faust renew his tragic, unfulfilled search to order nature and himself.

William James, in a letter of 1898 to Harvard's President Eliot concerning his much younger colleague, speaks of Santayana's "style, his subtlety of perception, and his cool-blooded truthfulness." The adjective is carefully chosen to imply not dispassion so much as understanding of the critic's role as the imaginative mediator between extremes. As does all great criticism, *Three Philosophical Poets* presents strongly personal points of view. Some of these our sardonic age tends to reject out of hand: "The sole advantage in possessing great works of literature lies in what they can help us to become" because they "add to the present value and dignity of our minds." Great literature must indeed tell us something about ourselves but what good, we ask, is such moral posturing about dignity in the midst of life's absurdity? Harbored within Santayana's optimistic prejudice toward idealism, his sustained hope that the rational will always triumph, lurks an understanding that life is deeply infused with evil. Yet evil, for the romantic optimist, is necessary to point up good, to help prove that grace, form and moral coherence are not only indisputable goods but even predominant necessities for civilized humanity.

The pendulum has swung now in the opposite direction. Santayana typified an already dying generation of scholar-aesthetes who professed to find beauty and integrity as primary concerns in life and art. We, on the other hand, are obsessed by ugliness, paradox and ambiguity. Only Santayana's critique of Dante survives nearly unscathed into our difficult era and it does so because, however much more we have learned in the intervening decades about his poetic craftsmanship, the lines of his thought and expression remain still clear and unified.

In criticizing the critic, then, we are observing the man himself as emblem of his times and as touchstone of our own. This process has something to teach us not only of the history of appreciation but of the timelessness of great literary documents, when we see our changing selves in their enduring images.

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JOAN S. CARBERG

A Vision by William Butler Yeats

When William Butler Yeats published *A Vision* in its final form in 1938, one reviewer commented that, in combination with the late plays, it was likely to "convince many that [Yeats had] gone unquestionably, though perhaps serviceably, mad. . . ."[1] Others took pains to assure their readers that Yeats was known as a very sane man. Indeed, despite the enormous energy Yeats expended on it, *A Vision* was, and is, dismissed as an oddity, of interest primarily for the light it sheds on Yeats' poems and plays.

Yeats completed most of it in the 1920's, at a time when the ideas of Marx and Freud seemed to be opening up the new horizons promised by Darwin and many people felt that science would soon dispel the last remnants of superstition. It was an offbeat time to be creating a supernaturally inspired cosmology—especially one that was hostile to rationality, psychology, equality, and the very idea of progress. Undeterred, Yeats struggled, with the help of his supernatural "instructors," to systematize the myths, analogies, metaphors and above all the symbols and images by which he defined life.

Most people impose, however unconsciously, some kind of imaginative order on their perceptions, then use the resulting system to rationalize their actions. This could be called a cosmology. Poets populate this order with symbols and images. Some poets—Dante, Milton, Blake, and Shelley, for example—have had highly articulate cosmologies. A poem can be seen as the intersection of this imaginative vision with everyday reality. But rarely does anyone, even a poet, try to drag his system up by the roots and set it out complete.

Yet Yeats, for all his hatred of abstraction, was driven first to find and then to create some coherent body of faith. Unlike most poets who cringe at the very thought of tampering with the fragile sources of their inspiration, Yeats, with the help of his spirits, spent years poking and prodding and interrogating that mysterious region

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where his poems germinated, and finally mapped it out as fully as he could. As he well knew, however, he did not have the philosopher's ability to simplify, the religious leader's capacity for blind faith, or the historian's firm dedication to fact. Above all, he did not have it in him to be a true believer and, even after his system was complete, he embraced it only intermittently and tentatively. Thus *A Vision* remains an imaginative construct, standing apart from our everyday world as if it were encased in one of Yeats' many spheres. For Yeats was a poet, and his abstractions are convincingly linked to reality only by the simplicity, passion, and earthiness of his poetry.

Yeats himself views his cosmology with a characteristic double vision. At times he regards it with a deep, almost religious seriousness as his own statement of faith; but he also recognizes that it is essentially a set of abstractions and as such is not to be compared with his poetry.

> I have really finished *A Vision*. . . . I write very much for young men between twenty and thirty, as at that age, and younger, I wanted to feel that any poet I cared for . . . saw more than he told of, had in some sense seen into the mystery. . . . The young men I write for may not read my *Vision*—they may care too much for poetry—but they will be pleased that it exists.[2]

Thus, unlike most of the books reviewed in this volume, *A Vision* derives its interest and importance to most people from its position within the body of Yeats' work. The late plays and *A Vision* have an almost symbiotic relationship; neither is quite comprehensible without the other. And, although the poems are amply sufficient unto themselves, many of them are significantly enriched and illuminated by an understanding of *A Vision*. Indeed, it is difficult to understand how anyone who loves Yeats' other work can fail to find his efforts fascinating.

Furthermore, one of the qualities that made Yeats such a great poet was a subtle and brilliant intelligence, and many of the ideas distilled in *A Vision*, especially as they are fleshed out in the plays and poems, are strikingly applicable in the chaotic world of the 1970's. For, despite some dated Romantic and aristocratic postures, Yeats speaks to our need for a sense of individual dignity in the face of what seems, increasingly, an uncontrollable world; to our despair with moral systems; to our sense that we are living at a turning point of civilization; to our disillusionment with the powers of science and rationality; and to our resurgence of interest in all things Eastern and, at least in some circles, in astrology and the occult.

II

In 1917, at the age of fifty-two, Yeats finally married; four days later, his new wife tried automatic writing with astonishing success. Yeats was highly excited at what came in the next few days. He says,

> I . . . offered to spend what remained of life explaining and piecing together these scattered sentences. "No," was the answer, "we have come to give you metaphors for poetry." . . . A system of symbolism, strange to my wife and to myself, certainly awaited expression, and when I asked how long that would take I was told years.[3]

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In 1919 the spirits started putting Mrs. Yeats into a trance. Then, Yeats says, "My teachers did not seem to speak out of her sleep but as if from above it, as though it were a tide upon which they floated." The communications were accompanied by various traditional occult manifestations: whistlings, gusts of warm air, sudden odors, usually of flowers but sometimes, when someone was ill, of burnt feathers.

All of this was not nearly as astonishing to Yeats as it would be to most of us, for he had spent a large part of his adult life in the serious study of magic. As early as 1892 he wrote,

> Now as to Magic. It is surely absurd to hold me "weak" or otherwise because I choose to persist in a study which I decided deliberately four or five years ago to make next to my poetry, the most important pursuit of my life. . . . the mystical life is the centre of all that I do and all that I think and all that I write.[4]

Having grown up in Ireland, familiar with both pagan and pseudo-Christian traditions of the supernatural, Yeats came to magic easily. He studied Druidism and early Celtic myth and helped Lady Gregory to collect folktales. He started a society to summon supernatural spirits to the aid of the Irish Independence Movement. He joined the Golden Dawn and stayed in it for twenty years, studying in connection with it the Jewish Kabala, Rosicrucianism, and techniques of meditation. He joined Madame Blavatsky's Theosophical Society and studied the occult directly. Between 1911 and 1916, he went through a period of intense interest in séance-oriented spiritism, going from "medium to medium."

What seems to have happened is not unusual in the literature of the occult: the psychic voices revealed to Yeats the scattered pieces of a system drawn almost entirely from his own formed and half-formed thought. Although the geometric figures illustrating the book were drawn in their original forms in automatic writing, what they do is order Yeats' own thoughts rather than introduce new ones. The synthesis in *A Vision* is deeply indebted to Blake and Shelley and borrows from Yeats' divergent readings in occult literature, Platonic philosophy, and Eastern religion. And, of course, although he claims that most of the system was given to him, Yeats did order, revise, and interpret it in the light of his own thinking and reading. He repeatedly states that supernatural spirits are not capable, as human beings are, of creation. And, in describing the kind of spirits who instructed him, he says,

> They may . . . so act upon the events of our lives as to compel us to attend to that perfection which, though it seem theirs, is the work of our own *Daimon*.[5]

Thus, despite the circumstances of its creation, I think it is fair to consider *A Vision* the work of Yeats' imagination alone.

Not unexpectedly, it is preoccupied with image, symbol, imagination, poetic process, and the role of the poet. It is more, however, than a disquisition on poetry, although it is less than a key to total understanding of the poems. Sometimes bewildering and arbitrary but always absorbing, the book does manage to lock together the fragments of Yeats' vision of the universe. It demands a second reading, for not only is it complex to a fault, but one moves through it as through a labyrinth, understanding the point of the journey only after traveling the entire course.

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III

Yeats' poems and, even more graphically, his plays are an expression of contradiction, paradox, dichotomy, and the everlasting clash of opposites. His early struggle to "hammer his thoughts into a unity," gradually became a search for a vision intense enough to encompass the struggle itself: "Between extremities/Man runs his course. . . ." Not surprisingly, then, Yeats' system begins with a pair of archetypal opposites: dark and light. Yeats calls the dark side *primary* because it is the utterly formless primal matter where life begins and ends, and the light side *antithetical* because it represents ideal bodily form and beauty, in precise opposition to everything *primary*.[6]

In each of his many reincarnations, a person's nature is some combination of these opposites. To express the fact that if the primary is waxing, the antithetical is waning, and vice versa, Yeats imagines a pair of intersecting cone-shaped gyres whirling in opposite directions in constant struggle against each other. If one's present life is near the pointed tip of the primary gyre, one's nature is almost entirely antithetical. In the course of many reincarnations, a soul moves back and forth between the two extremes, spiralling first in the direction of one of the gyres then of the other.

Yeats superimposes this dialectical image on a cyclical one by supposing that, as a soul goes through its many lives, its spiralling motion takes it around the Great Wheel, through all twenty-eight phases of the moon. The extreme primary end of the gyres is Phase One, the dark of the moon; the extreme antithetical is Phase Fifteen, the full moon. Since absolute dark and absolute light are perfect and perfection is divine, there is no human life at these two phases.

> A starlit or a moonlit dome distains
> All that man is,
> All mere complexities,
> The fury and the mire of human veins.
>
> "Byzantium"

Of the two, Yeats naturally prefers Phase Fifteen, the antithetical or *subjective* phase, for it embodies all that is heroic and poetic; the man closest to this phase is the quintessential Romantic man. Near this phase, a human being approaches perfect bodily form and beauty. He is closely in touch with instinct and intuition, and his personality reaches its fullest pitch of development. Antithetical man is so insistent on his own individuality and his right to choose his own life that he constantly defies his destiny, flinging heroic challenges at the world and living a life of passion and battle. Because he is entirely self-centered, he is solitary and inward looking, concerned with time and absorbed in imagination and contemplation through which he achieves vision and ecstasy. The Fifteenth Phase divinity has achieved Unity of Being and is capable of perfect sexual intercourse. He is often symbolized in Yeats' work by water, an entranced stare, the conjunction of Mars and Venus, or by a pale bird, often a swan or heron.

Near the First Phase, the primary or *objective* phase, the soul achieves a perfection

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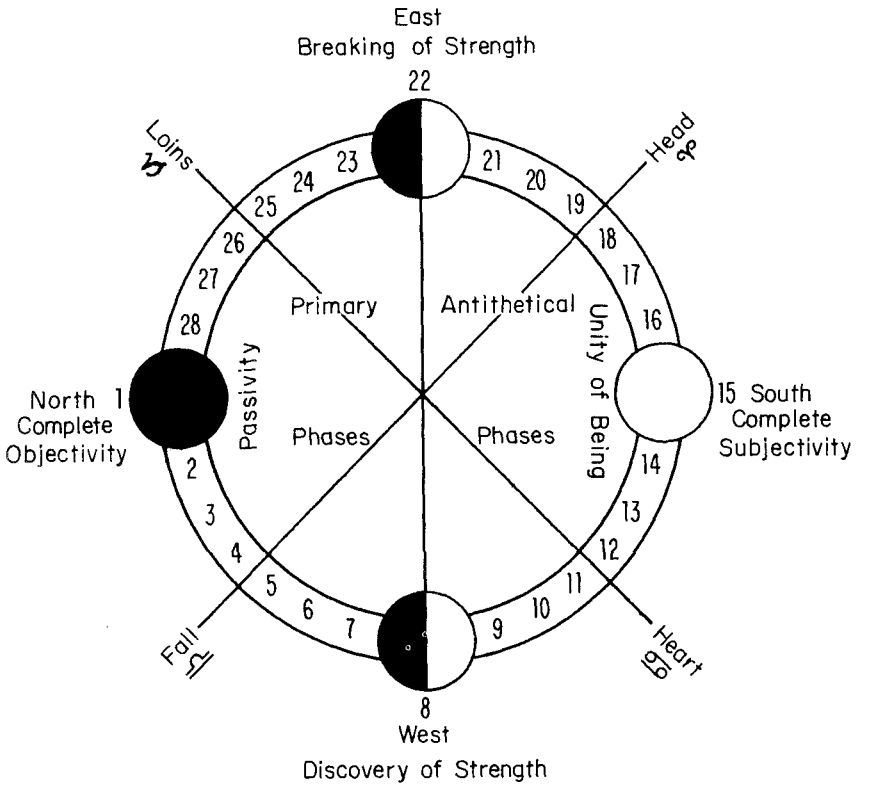

Yeats' Great Wheel from *A Vision*[7]

manifested by the formlessness of perfect communion. The body, on the other hand, is often ugly or even deformed. Approaching this phase, man is selfless, willing to submit himself to law, and curious rather than defiant toward the decrees of the dice. Since he is capable of belief in a creed, the primary man may have great strength of character; and since the body means little to him, he is often ascetic. He looks upon the world with curiosity by the bright light of the sun, and orients himself spatially, wishing to do what all around him are doing. He often understands truth and lives by reason, but these are abstractions which objectify the world and therefore miss the deeper insights Yeats prefers. This phase is often symbolized by earth, a beast, a piercing glance, and the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. Yeats clearly identifies it not only with the death of most of what he loves, but also with our own time. In Yeats' imagery, the symbols of the First and Fifteenth Phases are frequently joined, particularly when the subject is death or miracle.

About a third of *A Vision* is devoted to a very detailed description of the kinds of people likely to be born at each of the twenty-eight phases. Although a person's *Will*

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or ego derives from his own phase, his *Mask*—what he wishes to be or at least to show the world—is always drawn from precisely the opposite phase. Thus the highly individualized Romantic man dreams of the natural man. In addition, a person must contend with the fact that his intellect and environment always derive from two other phases still. Furthermore, intellect and environment, being outer directed, are essentially primary characteristics, while Will and Mask, being inner directed, are antithetical. No wonder the Yeatsian man is often tortured or frenzied.

The situation is not hopeless, however, for if a person can manage to achieve some semblance of balance among these forces—if, in Yeats' terms, he "lives according to phase"—the mixture itself can be constructive. For example, a Phase Ten man—Yeats cites Parnell—whose nature is that of the "image-breaker," draws his Mask from Phase Twenty-four which is characterized by the end of ambition. If he lives according to phase, this Mask can lend him organization, surely no detriment to the image-breaker, but if he is "out of phase," it can overwhelm him with inertia. Thus even at one phase, the character possibilities are complex and numerous. The particular combination of them found in any one person is determined by how he has lived his previous lives—by his *karma*, though Yeats doesn't use the term. In order to complete his experience at certain phases, a soul may have to be born in them more than once, as often as four times at the most difficult ones: Phase Eight, where his predominantly primary nature must become predominantly antithetical, and Phase Twenty-two where the reverse must happen. In addition to the general movement of the phases from primary to antithetical and back again, there is a kind of pendulum swing from phase to phase, a minor dialectical motion within the larger one.

Yeats assigns many of his favorite historical and literary figures to phases, and his passing comments on their works and personalities often make us see them in a new perspective. Nearest Phase Fifteen, he places Keats, Giorgione, Blake, Rabelais, Aretino, and Paracelsus in the company of Helen of Troy and most of the other beautiful women of the world. Near Phase One, of course, people are too selfless for the most part to leave any lasting individual mark on the world. In the last phases of the waning moon, the phases of death, Yeats places the Hunchback, the Saint, and the Fool; in the first phases of the new moon, the phases of birth, he places the Player on Pan's Pipes whom he describes as "the breath stirring on the face of the deep." In his description of history, Yeats is implacably opposed to all that is primary, but in his description of human nature he is somewhat less scathing. He places Rembrandt and his friend Synge at Phase Twenty-three, and Lady Gregory, whom he called "his most intimate friend," at Phase Twenty-four where "moral strength reaches its climax" —though, of course, moral strength is at best a mixed blessing in Yeats' world.

In the august company of Shelley and Dante, he places himself at Phase Seventeen, the phase of the *Daimonic* man. A man's *Daimon* is his ultimate self, the spirit which informs his imagination and puts him in touch with the supernatural as well as with the ground of his being. Yeats' description of his own phase casts ironic shadows on *A Vision:*

> He is called the *Daimonic* man because Unity of Being, and consequent expression of *Daimonic* thought, is now more easy than at any other phase. . . . The *Will* is falling asunder,

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but without explosion and noise. The separated fragments seek images rather than ideas, and these the intellect . . . must synthesise in vain, drawing with its compass-point a line that shall but represent the outline of a bursting pod. The being has for its supreme aim . . . to hide from itself and others this separation and disorder. . . . When true to phase the intellect must turn all its synthetic power to this task.[8]

This is surely a suggestion that, despite the fact that Yeats knew he was more competent at dealing with poetry than with intellectual synthesis, he accepted his need to create *A Vision* as a part of his fate as inevitable as his genius for poetry.

Not content to tell us what happens to the soul during its incarnations on this earth, Yeats, in a section entitled "The Soul in Judgment," describes what happens to it between lives. His ideas, borrowing as they do from occult lore and Eastern tradition and ritual, are exotic to say the least, and are often dismissed as hocus pocus. However, despite his view of psychology as an objectifying and fragmenting force, Yeats was certainly aware of the upheavals taking place in Vienna, and his discussion of the journey of the soul between lives bears intriguing resemblances to the antics of the Unconscious as reported by Freud and Jung. And surely the notion that man's nonphysical part goes on behaving in recognizable ways after his death is at least intriguing and far more plausible than some others.

Yeats imagines a supernatural world not entirely separate from our own. In fact, because only living human beings are capable of creation, the spirits often need our help, a fact which accounts for their intrusions into our lives in the form of various psychic phenomena. This realm of souls is in many ways inferior to our own, a notion perfectly in keeping with Yeats' consistent exhilaration with this life.

> Death and life were not
> Till man made up the whole,
> Made lock, stock and barrel
> Out of his bitter soul,
> Aye, sun and moon and star, all,
> And further add to that
> That, being dead, we rise,
> Dream and so create
> Translunar Paradise.
>
> "The Tower"

Essentially, this other world is a mopping-up operation in which a spirit completes the experiences of one life, forgets them, and reconciles himself to his next life. Immediately after death, the spirit[9] proceeds through six stages. In a *Vision of Blood Kindred*, aided by the ceremonious ministrations of the living, it synthesizes all the images and impulses of the bodily self which it must now cast off. In the *Meditation*, it must exhaust nature, pain, pleasure, and emotion by reliving the events of its life over and over again, sometimes in sequence and sometimes in order of declining intensity. To do so it must borrow emotions and thoughts and words from human beings by entering their dreams. "Much of a dream's confusion," according to Yeats, "comes from the fact that the image belongs to some unknown person, whereas emotion, names, language, belong to us alone."[10] It may also return to earth as a ghost to

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repeat over and over some intense or incompleted act such as a murder or love affair. It may, in fact, cling for centuries to some semblance of its old life, becoming "a dangerous succuba or incubus living through the senses and nerves of others." The more completely it relives its previous life, the happier its next life will be. In the *Shiftings*, the spirit is "purified of good and evil" by being forced to complete its knowledge of them by contemplating whatever it did not understand in life. Again, Yeats' notions that contemplation leads to understanding and that total understanding is a kind of purification are central to his need to create *A Vision* in the first place.

After this, the spirit lives for a while in a state of complete equilibrium called *Marriage*. In the *Purification*, despite the fact that it no longer remembers the events of its previous life, a spirit may be required to complete "some synthesis left unfinished in its past life." This, in fact, is what Yeats' instructors were doing. He says,

> Because only the living create [the spirit] may seek the assistance of those living men into whose "unconsciousness" or incarnate *Daimon*, some affinity of aim . . . permits it to enter. Those who taught me this system did so, not for my sake, but for their own."[11]

Here the spirit also begins to seek another life with circumstances suitable to its own unique nature. In its final state, *Foreknowledge*, the spirit must reconcile itself to every detail of its next life before it can be reborn. It may suffer strong emotions, wishing to prevent what it foresees and, in its frustration, manifest itself to humans, but it can do no real harm.

In this other world, Yeats also places a group of spirits called the *Spirits of the Thirteenth Cone* (or *Sphere*), which are at least remotely similar to a traditional God. They guide the spirit on its journey; and, after a soul has traveled around the Great Wheel some indefinite number of times, it joins these spirits and stops being reborn. They even punish people, although for a sin more Yeatsian than traditional, that of refusing experience.

IV

A Vision also includes Yeats' imaginative organization of history. This too is a cyclical system with characteristics parallel to those on his wheel of reincarnations. As Yeats admits, his knowledge of history is sketchy and he fills in his wheels primarily with literary and artistic events. A given period of time partakes of the characteristics of its phases on each of the several wheels on which it appears. A man of any phase can be born at any point in history, although if his own phase is close to that of his time, he will be typical.

Yeats imagines history as inching its way around a giant wheel representing the Great Year of 26,000 years. As it does so, it also goes through smaller cycles: during a lunar month of 2200 years, history completes the cycle of one civilization; during a solar month of the same length, but starting at the midpoint of a lunar month, it completes the cycle of a religious era. In a wildly confusing Chinese puzzle of wheels, each pair of months—about 4000 years—also inscribes a circle so that one month is

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primary and the next antithetical. In addition, each individual millennium is a cycle so that the world experiences a dark age and a time of light once every thousand years.

In the beautifully written chapter, "Dove or Swan," Yeats sets aside a good deal of this complexity and traces the last four thousand years of history through the phases of the antithetical cycle of the Greek era from 2000 B.C. to Christ and those of the primary Christian era ever since. Simultaneously, he discusses the phases of each millennium cycle involved.

Yeats envisions the antithetical Greek era as born of Leda and the swan; our own as born of the virgin and the dove. Close to the Fifteenth Phase of the mainly antithetical Greek era, he tells us, Oedipus, "careful of heroic man . . . stood and mourned over the shortness of time, and man's inadequacy to his fate." At the Fifteenth Phase of our own primary era, at about the year 1000, Yeats can find no adequate symbol: "Something must have happened in the courts and castles of which history has perhaps no record." Undaunted, he sweeps us along with the force of his poetry:

> The stream set in motion by the Galilean Symbol has filled its basin, and seems motionless for an instant before it falls over the rim. In the mist of the basin stands, in motionless contemplation, blood that is not His blood upon His Hands and Feet. One that feels but for the common lot, and mourns over the length of years and the inadequacy of man's fate to man.[12]

At the Twenty-second or "breaking of strength" phases of their respective eras, but at the shining Fifteenth Phases of their millennia, Yeats places the age of Phidias—"the breaking of Greek traditional faith"—and the Italian Renaissance—"the breaking of the Christian synthesis"—as embodied in Botticelli, Crivelli, Mantegna, and da Vinci. At the Fifteenth Phase of the first millennium, Yeats places the flowering of Byzantium. In the kind of suggestive comment that gives *A Vision* its conviction, Yeats pulls together the seemingly very different art of these three periods:

> Because the Fifteenth Phase can never find direct human expression, being a supernatural incarnation, it impressed upon work and thought an element of strain and artifice, a desire to combine elements which may be incompatible, or which suggest by their combination something supernatural.[13]

To Yeats the Romantic Movement represents the first awakening of the soul in the last bright phases of our own millennium. Most of his own time, from 1875 to 1927, he places at the Twenty-second Phase, and calls it "a period of abstraction" to be "preceded and followed by abstraction"—a poet's excuse, perhaps for the Roman holiday of abstractions embodied in *A Vision*, published in its first form in 1925.

When the first volume of Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* appeared in English in 1926, Yeats was delighted to find certain similarities with his own system, particularly in dates and images. He felt that these coincidences gave his own work a kind of validity that he had hardly expected; he even suggested, rather whimsically, that his own instructors must have been paying visits to Spengler's Daemon.

Indeed the idea shared by Yeats and Spengler that our culture is wearing itself out

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and coming to an end has been amplified in our own time to the point where most of us find ourselves thinking, at least part of the time, in terms of living in the midst of an ending. According to *A Vision*, both in our own millennium and in the Christian era, we are presently living in the phases most detested by Yeats; in fact we are destined to reach total darkness at approximately the year 2000—any day now. In more balanced moods, we may recall the Romantic poet's affection for the self-pitying conviction that the creative genius is ever out of phase and unappreciated in his own time. Often, however, it is difficult to detach ourselves from the undeniable malaise of our culture, from the perception—at once terrifying and comic—that simple human needs are somehow out of phase with our time.

Yeats saw our time as one in which fragmentation would proceed to the point of complete dissolution and his poems are haunting to us partly because of this sense of dread. Certainly the vision we have lived with since 1945 of a few survivors of nuclear war forced to start over in some jungle lends weight to Yeats' specific images of new and primitive beginnings. Indeed, listening to his words, one almost feels that Yeats did foresee the quiet resignation with which some of the wisest men look on as television cheapens experience, garbage takes over the world, and pilots bomb villages they can hardly see for reasons they don't even ask to understand.

> Turning and turning in the widening gyre
> The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
> The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
> The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
> The best lack all conviction, while the worst
> Are full of passionate intensity.
>
> Surely some revelation is at hand;
> Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
>
> "The Second Coming"

And probably, in a lighter vein, most of us have moments of arrogant exasperation with our world in which we feel a certain kinship with the antithetical hero who, struggling in the last phase before the dark of the moon, cries:

> And he will send up Fools against me,
> Meandering, roaring, yelling,
> Whispering Fools, then chattering Fools,
> And after that morose, melancholy,
> Sluggish fat, silent Fools;
> And I, moon-crazed, moon-blind,
> Fighting and wounded, wounded and fighting.
> I never thought of such an end.
>
> *The Herne's Egg*

The second coming, however, ushers in a new antithetical age, an age which will start moving toward the full moon rather than away from it, in which, even at first,

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the phases are characterized by birth rather than death, by the innocence of the natural man rather than by the viciousness and foolishness of decay. Thus Yeats can describe the second coming with an exhilaration not unlike the excitement and sense of pending rebirth which has accompanied our horror at the events which have destroyed American complacency in the last few years.

> What matter though numb nightmare ride on top.
> And blood and mire the sensitive body stain?
> . . . . . .
> What matter: Out of a cavern comes a voice,
> And all it knows is that one word 'Rejoice!'
>
> Conduct and work grow coarse, and coarse the soul,
> What matter? . . . . .
> . . . . . all things run
> On that unfashionable gyre again.
>
> "The Gyres"

V

In his work—and here it is impossible to separate *A Vision* from the later poems and plays—Yeats reconciles the Western Romantic man convinced that he is the free and meaningful center of his world with a vast Eastern universe in which all is fated and time is endless. The vision which holds the two together is that of a ritual battle in which man celebrates life by pitting himself against his destiny, often as embodied by the gods. The fact that man always loses only adds to the exhilaration, courage, and recklessness of his attempt. Yeats, in other words, loves the individual's beauty and his illusion of power, symbolized by the Fifteenth Phase, in the teeth of his conviction that the individual in no way controls his own destiny. He not only accepts, he celebrates, as the very definition of our humanity, the endless struggle this implies. In fact, the human being's most magnificent moment is the one in which he performs some forbidden act and brings the wrath of the gods down around his head, for by so doing he achieves the illusion—and it is an illusion—that he is choosing his fate. Yeats' favorite hero, Cuchulain, pelts the hawk god with stones and stares his guardian in the eye, then receives the god's dreadful curse. But in his defeat, he asserts himself once more: "He comes! Cuchulain, son of Sualtim, comes!" and his thoughts are described in a song:

> Folly alone I cherish,
> I choose it for my share;
> Being but a mouthful of air,
> I am content to perish;
> I am but a mouthful of sweet air.
>
> *At the Hawk's Well*

This peculiar combination of assertion and resignation is, perhaps, what Yeats referred to at the end of his life when he wrote, "I have aimed at tragic ecstasy."[14]

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In a gesture of defiance worthy of one of his heroes, Yeats makes clear his preference for the human state over that of the gods. Despite the fact that he rarely uses the term God, we can distinguish at least four forces which partake of characteristics usually attributed to God. First is the overriding destiny which runs the whole system; second, the formlessness of Phase One out of which man arises; third, the perfect form and unity of the Fifteenth Phase; and fourth, the Thirteenth Sphere to which man, having traveled on the gyres long enough, finally returns. The gods who embody these forces may be all powerful, but they are also perfect, a limitation as far as Yeats is concerned. Man, for example, because he can participate imaginatively in perfection, can comprehend the battle between the human and the divine while the gods cannot because the perfect cannot understand imperfection. Furthermore, only the imperfect experience desire, for at the Fifteenth Phase all desire is consummated and at the First it has not yet been born. And out of desire arise imagination and passion, the very attributes which enable man to create: ". . . only an aching heart/Conceives a changeless work of art."

In *A Vision* human beings at almost all phases battle against destiny. Since a person's Mask is always drawn from the phase opposite his own, an important part of his character is formed by his continual resistance to the phases through which he must pass next. In the plays and poems, heroes near the Fifteenth Phase battle birds and other gods of perfect beauty, while fools and saints near Phase One scramble to define and assert themselves in the face of encroaching formlessness. Of course, since man cannot win, and even death only leads to a string of other lives, the flaunting gesture by which man celebrates his illusory freedom and uniqueness is absurd. And as Yeats gets older he creates heroes who are more and more absurd. At the same time, however, they are more and more magnificent. Thus men go on and on endlessly, *A Vision* tells us, pitching themselves, with absurdity and magnificence, against immovable forces.

> I sing what was lost and dread what was won,
> I walk in a battle fought over again,
> My king a lost king, and lost soldiers my men.
>
> "What Was Lost"

The view, more common in the East than in the West, that life is a vast and endless pattern over which man has no control raises certain moral questions, at least in the context of our own traditions. If all is predestined, a person will end up obeying his destiny whether or not he tries to achieve goodness, thus moral effort and moral outrage are equally silly. And, if this is only one of many reincarnations, a person can never squander his only chance, let alone take on an eternity in hell or earn a heavenly reward. This being the case, what does it matter how he acts?

Indeed, Yeats has been criticized for lacking a vision of evil, and on more substantial grounds than that he sympathized with Fascism and aristocracy. For, despite his brilliant displays of passion and his poignant expressions of regret and loss, Yeats' work does have a detached quality, and he puts *A Vision* together with the dispassion of a watchmaker. Yeats was aware of this coolness in himself: in his system, for exam-

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ple, due to the total self-centeredness of those who live close to the Fifteenth Phase, love for another person doesn't even become an aim, let alone a possibility, until the phase after his own.

I think, however, that Yeats does come to terms with evil in his own way, by creating ritual. He wrote, "I always feel that my work is not drama but the ritual of a lost faith,"[15] and frequently described the kind of mind-expanding Fifteenth-Phase trance that he hoped to induce by the use of rhythm, dance, masks, chanting, and song. Ritual enables a person to partake imaginatively of the most intense moments of life without experiencing the wracking emotions that accompany them in reality, but also without reducing them to meaningless abstractions.

Yeats can indeed present the most bloodthirsty event with a kind of cool acceptance or even an exhilaration hardly typical in a literature as morally structured and concerned with the punishment of evil-doing as that of English. In *Purgatory* an Old Man kills his grandson in order to purify his mother's ghost by stopping the line of polluted blood, then carefully cleans his knife in the sod, picks up the boy's money, and goes off to "tell . . . jokes among new men." When we participate with the Old Man in killing the boy and destroying his own blood line, what we discover is our own blood-lust and self-loathing; hopefully we meet them face to face for a moment and pay tribute to the fact that they exist.

This does not mean that we do not understand throughout the experience that murdering children in real life is inexpressibly evil. Henry James teaches us to distinguish among the delicate threads of good and evil running through our conscious lives. Yeats attempts to deal with the fears and passions which beset our unconscious selves and, in a spirit not unlike that of the psychoanalytic theories surfacing during his lifetime, he does so without judging them. *A Vision* spells out very clearly his conviction that we are purified of guilt not by obeying a set of laws, but by contemplating good and evil until our knowledge of them is complete.

> Such thought—such thought have I that hold it tight
> Till meditation master all its parts . . .
> . . . . . .
> Such thought, that in it bound
> I need no other thing. . . .
>
> "All Soul's Night"—An Epilogue to *A Vision*

If Yeats makes us respond to the dreadful with exhilaration as well as horror, he is touching us at a level deeper than that of moral judgment. For a ritual is like a dream: we slay our dragons or are slain by them, yet we wake up whole and dry eyed. Nowadays we accept the idea that one of the purposes of dreams—and surely the purposes of ritual are similar—is to help us maintain a healthy stance toward our lives, toward what we think "in the marrow-bone."

If we are more offended by the moral coolness in *A Vision* than in Yeats' poetry, perhaps it is because the poetry more successfully creates ritual. Even in *A Vision*, however, Yeats sees human nature and history as if from a great distance; in its better passages he stylizes them to a point where his patterns seem inevitable. Certainly the

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book neither describes nor explains life in any coherent way, yet it has a coherence. Perhaps, at its best, this is the coherence of ritual. Yeats is alway more priest than preacher; his work more resembles the dream in which our deepest being tries to cast out its demons than our waking life in which we try to establish lines of action in some way compatible with what we judge to be good. And perhaps his approach is particularly appropriate in a time when the preacher no longer knows what to preach and the moral intricacies of reality are such that we can seldom say, as the Victorians so often could: "This is right and this is wrong."

Of course, if all is fated, then belief as well as moral judgment is beside the point.

> I—though heart might find relief
> Did I become a Christian man and choose for my belief
> What seems most welcome in the tomb—play a predestined part.
>
> "Vacillation"

Thus, just as ritual puts emotion at a remove, so *affirmation*, in Yeats' terms, puts the complete commitment of belief at a remove; at the same time, it is an antidote to the negations of skepticism. It enabled Yeats to reconcile, at least partially, his compelling need to believe and his revulsion at the blinding aspects of belief. Not long after a period of intense work on *A Vision*, he wrote:

> Belief implies an unknown object, a covenant attested with a name or signed with blood, and being more emotional than intellectual may pride itself on lack of proof. But if I affirm that such and such is so, the more complete the affirmation, the more complete the proof, and even when incomplete, it remains valid within some limit. I must kill scepticism in myself, except in so far as it is mere acknowledgement of a limit. . . . I have felt when re-writing every poem . . . that by assuming a self of past years, as remote from that of today as some dramatic creation, I touched a stronger passion, a greater confidence than I possess or ever did possess.[16]

Whole bodies of belief are, to Yeats, like masks that a person can put on and off. One of the beauties of ritual is that a person can participate in it by affirming it; he can enjoy the sense of meaning and coherence it bestows without limiting his possibilities by permanently embracing a set of dogmas. The use of the indefinite article in the title, *A Vision*, suggests that the book is to be considered as one of many possible visions, not as the final word. In his Introduction, Yeats defines his own attitude toward the book in just these terms.

> Some will ask whether I believe in the actual existence of my circuits of sun and moon. . . . I can but answer that if sometimes, overwhelmed by miracle as all men must be when in the midst of it, I have taken such periods literally, my reason has soon recovered; and now that the system stands out clearly in my imagination I regard them as stylistic arrangements of experience comparable to the cubes in the drawing of Wyndham Lewis and to the ovoids in the sculpture of Brancusi.[17]

It is important to realize, however, that "stylistic arrangements of experience" were, to Yeats, the most deeply serious kind of expression possible. With his great appreciation for paradox, he must have enjoyed creating a statement which accurately reflected his own seriousness but could at the same time be read by the unsympathetic critics he anticipated as a kind of disclaimer.

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Surely many of us today, bombarded as we are by contradictory ideas and experiences not only from the news media but also from the diffusion of our own lives, unconsciously assume the stance that Yeats calls affirmation, enjoying tradition, ritual, and ceremony although we can no longer believe in them and making subtle shifts in position as we move from the breakfast table, to the classroom, to the PTA meeting, to the cocktail party, to the weekend retreat. It is not even unusual for a young person today to try on a series of the most colorful and extreme masks: spending time as a radical protester, then as a construction worker, then in an Eastern religious sect, then in business school. Although we often deplore such inconsistencies—in, for example, the Marxist-oriented professor who is deeply attached to his hundred acres in the country—they arise from the same impulse as Yeats' philosophy: a desire to live to the uttermost limits of our human potential.

VI

Theology and poetry are both, in a sense, efforts to bind up in words some level of mystery which cannot ever be bound up. Poetry—a kind of ritual—is an effort to share the mystical moment, to create a semblance of one's own experience in the listener; theology is an effort to make sense of it. Since neither is entirely possible, such efforts are not unlike the Yeatsian hero's ever-doomed gestures of defiance.

Yeats hated the reductive qualities of abstraction. Yet, for all his love of the Fifteenth Phase, he could not rest content with a totally inward-looking subjective approach to mystery. He was obsessed by the need for a bony structure which would hold together the contradictions of his experience. If he had lived in an earlier time, he might, like Dante or Milton, have made do with an essentially Christian superstructure. He was, however, very much a modern man and could find no existing theology quite acceptable. Finally, spurred by his spirits, he was driven to dredge up his own. Thus, despite the archaic sound of the term "cosmology," *A Vision* is one man's answer to concerns which are particularly acute in the twentieth century. This is not a time when people tend to take mythologies literally, and no one, not even Yeats, defends *A Vision* as literal truth. Nevertheless, many of its patterns are intriguingly applicable in our own time.

When his instructors told Yeats that they had come to bring him "metaphors for poetry," perhaps they were warning him that what they were pushing him into was a highly personal mission which would communicate itself to the world primarily through his poetry. At least in cooler moments, Yeats recognized that *A Vision* would be of interest mainly to those who already loved his poetry. And finally, despite its intrinsic fascination, the greatest joy related to reading *A Vision* comes when one returns to the poems and plays afterwards and sees with new eyes their power and coherence.

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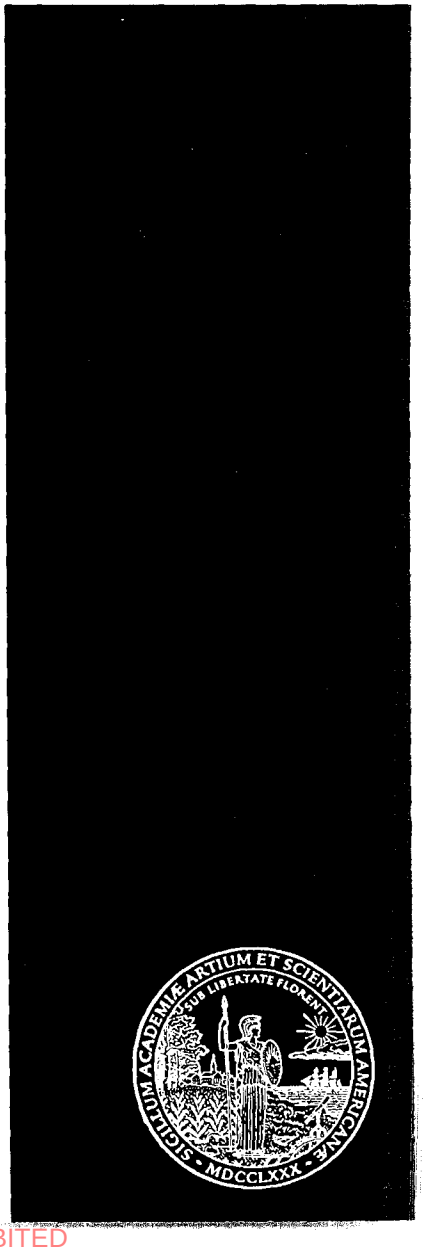

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